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AFTER LIFE.

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AFTER LIFE.

(SEQUEL TO 'THE JOURNAL OF A HOME LIFE.')

BY

ELIZABETH M. SEWELL,

AUTHOR OF

'AMY HERBERT,' 'LANFTON PARSONAGE,' 'A GLIMPSE OF THE WORLD,' ETC.

L'homme propose, mais Dieu dispose.



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Dedicated
TO THE MEMORY OF
L. F. C.

AFTER LIFE.

(SEQUEL TO 'THE JOURNAL OF A HOME LIFE')



CHAPTER I.

Paris, Hôtel de Londres: October 2, 18 . . Two years since I closed my journal. At least, I have not for that time made more than occasional notes of where we have walked, and who has happened to call. I have been too busy, and there has been really little to write worth remembering.

Changes have come, but they have been gradual, till last spring, when I had a startling anxiety. Cecil had a cough, which at first no one thought much about; but one day there were symptoms of hæmorrhage. The doctor said it was accidental—there was nothing seriously amiss; yet she failed visibly. There was no definite illness, but her lips burned like fire when she kissed me at night, and she lost strength and appetite, and has continued to lose them. I took her, according to the physician's advice, to Tunbridge Wells, and Brighton; but change has done nothing except for the moment. Now, Dr. Spencer has ordered her abroad, and we are on our way to Pau. A winter abroad, it is said, may be of great service. I try to think so, but my heart fails me. I go back to the past, thinking how or what I could have done differently: but it has all come upon me so suddenly. The dear child was looking and seeming so

strong, that I had quite forgotten there were ever any symptoms of delicacy ; and even now there is nothing tangible, no pain. There seems no reason why she should not get well, and everyone talks confidently of recovery—everyone, that is, except Dr. Spencer. His cautious words when we parted, made me—oh ! so heart-sick. She is bearing the journey fairly well, better indeed than I had expected. The novelty of everything amuses and cheers her, though she was very tired last night. We had a good passage from Folkestone, slept at Boulogne, and came on to Paris yesterday afternoon. Ina and Marietta are with me ; and I have a French maid, highly recommended, who has agreed to come with me to Paris on trial, and I am to take her on if it should suit me. My little ones are left at Dernham with Mrs. Bradshaw. It has been a terrible wrench, and at one time I had quite made up my mind to bring Agnes, at least, with me ; but when I began to calculate ways and means, I found it would not be right, especially when Mrs. Bradshaw pressed upon me her desire of taking charge of them all ; and with her genuine common sense (always the truest kindness), showed me how the matter could be arranged without what she would consider any expense to herself ; though I am afraid there must always in these cases be expense in unforeseen ways, which cannot be provided against. Drayton is left with the children, and Charlie is to spend his holidays at Beechwood. I half dreaded lest Mrs. Penrhyn should make some offer about them which I might find a difficulty in refusing ; but she has not even enquired what was to be done with them. As regards Cecil, however, she has been most urgent and suggestive. I could with difficulty escape from seeing her doctor in London, instead of Dr. Spencer, whom Mr. Heathfield recommended, and whose decision I was quite willing to abide by. Happily,

Dr. Spencer is in some respects a favourite with Mrs. Penrhyn, and she yielded, after I had put the correspondence into Mr. Heathfield's hands, and she found she could make no impression upon him. Then she took up another anxiety, and sent me letter after letter about our route, and the railways, and the best hotels, taking it for granted that I knew nothing, and that it was her business to see that I made no mistakes. I must do her the justice, however, to say, that she was very thoughtful also for Cecil's personal comforts, and sent her a fur cloak and some air cushions ; but even these were accompanied by remarks which implied that I was not likely to think of them. I can scarcely say that I am annoyed at this, for in fact I have become accustomed to it. All our communications for the last two years have been of a similar character. Ina and Cecil have paid two visits at Arling ; but Mrs. Penrhyn has studiously avoided any further advances to intimacy with me. She knows that I know her, and she is well content to keep me at a distance. We have had no explanations. That strange misunderstood, misinterpreted past is left as it was. When Marietta came to live with me, Mrs. Penrhyn wrote to congratulate me on the arrangement, 'as it would, she hoped, tend to remove the unpleasant impression caused by my unhappy difference with poor Mr. Randolph ;' but when I asked her to explain what she meant, I was told that explanations were quite useless, it was much better to 'let bygones be bygones,' and so the subject was dropped. What Mrs. Penrhyn thinks, or what she says, or what other people think and say, must still remain a mystery. Only one thing I am quite sure of, that I have never thoroughly recovered my place in the estimation of Lady Anson and Mrs. Harcourt. The old suspicion of my perfect propriety crops up, as it were, every now and then ; besides which, they can neither of

them forgive me for having kept Marietta in the neighbourhood. They have no cause, however, for uneasiness. Mr. Anson is still abroad; and, indeed, Marietta has received no special attentions from anyone, unless the rector's awkward and silent devotion may be considered such. He pays long visits, and looks at her all the time, and is evidently supremely happy when business gives him an excuse for a private interview; but it does not seem that his thoughts and wishes ever go further. In fact, everything has gone on quietly, and nothing has occurred to make me regret that I offered her a home in her sorrow and loneliness. Independent of the pleasure of her society, her influence over Ina has been one of almost unmixed good. I say almost, because I think they have been at times so absorbed in each other that, if Cecil were capable of jealousy, she might have suffered from it. Not that Ina is, or ever will be, Marietta's equal, morally or intellectually. She is very quick, but she hates thought, and she dearly loves mystery; and, with all my efforts, I have not succeeded in making her what I call perfectly sincere. Marietta sees and laments it. I think there are times when the consciousness of it chills her; but, with her Italian temperament, she can make wonderful allowance for the faults of those to whom she has given her heart.

Intellectually, I hope Ina has profited by having been made to study a year longer than most girls in the present day. The absurdity of 'coming out,' as it is called, at seventeen strikes me more and more. People talk about a course of deep reading which is to form the mind, but if the mind is not prepared for the course of reading, of what good will it be? The one year lost is just that which is more important than any that have gone before, because young people are beginning to know the value of what they learn.

As to Cecil, I don't know what I have done with her. She has not come to the deep reading age, and I have not dared to press her with much work. Mrs. Bradshaw begged me one day to give her a receipt for turning out other girls like her, and asked me how I had managed to make her what she is. I could but say, borrowing an idea from Topsy, 'I let her grow.' Really and truly I am aware of nothing else, unless it may be that I have loved her, God only knows how dearly. Perhaps also I may add that I have given her confidence, and put upon her small responsibilities. Of positive teaching or direction she has had little or nothing, except in the way of regular study. She has not seemed to require it. The pure transparent mind has apparently been unsullied even by the breath of self-consciousness. It has simply reflected heaven, and so it has become heavenly.

Paris, October 4.—This hotel is particularly comfortable; the servants are so thoughtful and attentive; but it is rather expensive, as there is no *table d'hôte*, and they charge six francs for a private dinner. I have been trying to tempt Cecil's appetite; it is so difficult to make her eat as much as she ought. Ina and I went to the Louvre this morning, and Marietta (who has often seen it) stayed with Cecil. One is glad to refresh one's artistic memory from time to time. Not that my memory is artistic at all. I like certain pictures because I like them, and often cannot tell the reason why. The famous Murillo I do not greatly admire. That particular subject, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, never touches me; and in order heartily to enjoy a picture, I must enter into the subject as well as admire the painting. As we were leaving the Louvre, we passed a young man whose face struck both Ina and myself as having a singular resemblance to Bessie Penrhyn's. It crossed my mind afterwards whether he could possibly be John Penrhyn. If so, I am glad we

are going away from Paris so soon, for it would be awkward to make acquaintance with him, and not to show him attentions; and yet I could scarcely avoid this, considering the family to which he belongs. He is a very gentlemanly-looking young fellow: more than that, indeed; there is something poetical and interesting about him, which makes the likeness to Bessie Penrhyn all the more singular; for nothing can be more matter-of-fact than she is. I think there was something in the melancholy look of the eyes which recalled her. Yet his were dark, and hers are grey. But perhaps, after all, he was a perfect stranger. It was extremely hot all day, and I was tired, and glad to rest in the afternoon. When it became cooler, we took Cecil for a drive through the best parts of Paris and the Champs Elysées. She thoroughly enjoyed it at the time, but she came in rather exhausted, and I reproached myself for having taken her too far.

Monday, October 6.—Cecil has not been out since Saturday. I am afraid she has suffered from the long drive. One thing rather troubles me. I am obliged to give up so much of the duty of attending upon her to Marietta. Ina cannot go about without me; neither, indeed, can Marietta. So I was at church twice yesterday, in order that they might both go, and it seems now as if I had not spent any time with Cecil. I watch Ina anxiously in this new phase of life. Travelling brings out character so strongly. There is self at the bottom still, a very sweet, gentle-mannered, refined self; but withal a very determined and persistent one. She knows it; that is my consolation. She is not blind, as she used to be. She was bent upon going to the Madeleine this afternoon, just to see the church, and she persuaded Marie—our French maid—to ask permission to go there herself; and then Ina came and said she should so like to go with her. I soon found out that it was Ina's own suggestion, and I told her plainly that I

wished she would always come to me in a direct way. But I did not refuse her. She is too old now to be treated as a child. One can but put her want of openness in trifles before her, and make her ashamed of it; and she was ashamed, and confessed it, half earnestly, half laughingly, saying to me, that she knew she liked to gain her point in a roundabout way. I looked grave, and then she was sorrowful; and so we made up our little disagreement very affectionately; but, though vastly improved, Ina's impressions are never very deep.

She told me when she came back that she had seen cousin John, as she will call him, as they were crossing the Rue Tronchet, and that she is sure he had the same kind of curiosity about her that she had about him, for they mutually stared at each other. It is just possible there may be a family likeness in Ina which may have attracted notice (supposing it to be John Penrhyn), though I confess I do not see it. Ina is like her father's family, who were much handsomer than the Penrhyns. I was amused at the simple way in which she talked about the little rencontre, not at all, or apparently not at all, with the suspicion that there could have been any attraction for the stranger besides curiosity. And most probably there was not, for the young man looked far too much of a gentleman to be impertinent; but Ina would by nature be inclined to construe any notice into admiration. It is only, I think, since Marietta has been with her that she has learnt to understand how greatly a woman's safety and happiness depend upon being, as a rule, unnoticed. At any rate, so long as she can come and tell me whom she meets, and what she says and does, I am satisfied. I never criticise, or advise, or comment upon any of these little confidences. She laughs sometimes, and says that no one can think so badly of her as I do, because nobody hears all the naughty things that I do. I tell her, yes,

they are very naughty, but I was naughty in the same way myself when I was her age. Sometimes she insists upon hearing some of the naughtinesses, and I give her a little insight into a few of the foolish things I used to do and say, ending with a lecture upon my own misdeeds and my repentance, which I leave her to apply to herself. It is all experimentalising, but I do for the best; and, anyhow, I have gained Ina's confidence. She will tell me anything and everything when it is past. All that I complain of is, that when her will is strong upon any point she does not acknowledge her wishes plainly beforehand. That great shock at the time of Mr. Randolph's death did a great deal for her. But she wants something more to make her thoroughly in earnest.

It has come into my mind to-day whether, after all, I have been wise in leaving Drayton behind. Mrs. Bradshaw would have been satisfied without her, as she is expecting the Colonel's family; and their nurse would have superintended my little ones with the help of an under-maid, whom I could have provided. But at the time I fancied a French maid would be more helpful. I did not quite foresee how useful Marietta would be able to make herself, from her acquaintance with foreign ways, neither was I as anxious about Cecil as I am now. It is better to own this at once; I shall do myself no good by trying to hide from myself the truth of things. I am anxious—more so to-day than I have been at all. There is such a great languor and depression about the dear child. . . . Marietta has just been to me. We had a little conversation, and I have arranged to write to Mrs. Bradshaw, and propose that Drayton shall join us here. I shall be sorry to part with Marie, but it is the only thing to be done. Marietta says that having to talk French to her tries Cecil, and that there are little things which Cecil cannot bear anyone to do for her except

Drayton. She would not say this to me, fearing it might worry me, but Marietta saw that it was right I should know. So Drayton is to join us. It will detain us a little, but we had always intended to stay at least a week in Paris, for I had hoped that Cecil might enjoy it. But she seems scarcely equal to the fatigue of driving about. I wish I could prevent myself from looking so anxious. Marietta says that Cecil watches my face, and always makes an effort to be bright when I come into the room, because she cannot bear to vex me. I did not know that I betrayed my feelings so plainly; and, in fact, I have been more hopeful since we left England until to-day, when I have been startled by seeing what a great step in the downward direction has been taken since Saturday. Is it from fatigue? If so, the week's rest may do wonders.

October 11, Saturday.—Drayton came yesterday. The relief to my mind is inexpressible. She is so much used to illness, and can judge from symptoms so much better than myself. Cecil was better on Tuesday and Wednesday, and went out a little: if it had been otherwise I think I must have called in a physician, though Dr. Spencer had given full directions which he hoped would last till we reached Pau. On those two days I managed a little sight-seeing for Ina. She wished very much to go to Versailles, but it really was not possible. It is not a place to be hurried over. It seems unkind to leave Marietta so often at home; but then she knows Paris thoroughly, and I think too she has a latent dread of possibly meeting her aunt in this great cosmopolitan city. Nothing has been heard of Mrs. Randolph for six months. Previous to that there were letters from time to time—always mysterious—never saying where she actually was, only where her letters were to be directed. That she is with Lady Chase I have little doubt, and that this is the reason of her secrecy; for I imagine she thinks that were

she to own it, Marietta would no longer write to her. And Mrs. Randolph clings to Marietta with a characteristic appreciation of all that is good and pure, and which yet does not appear to weigh a grain in the balance against her own selfish inclinations. I felt for her deeply at the time of her husband's death. Her letters then were despairing. She was overwhelmed with self-reproach. But as for action as the result of feeling, it never appears to enter her head as a possibility. Marietta suffers from this ignorance of her aunt's movements in a most vexatious way. Mr. Randolph's legacy was in some way dependent upon property on which his wife had a claim; at least, her consent was necessary before it could be sold, according to Mr. Randolph's wish, and the legacy actually handed over to Marietta: and in consequence of this mysterious silence, and the loss of letters, and the perpetual delays and misunderstandings which have been the result, two years have gone by, and Marietta has actually never received a penny of her uncle's legacy, and will have to pay a large sum to her lawyer for trying to settle a matter which it seems cannot be settled, at least till Mrs. Randolph is found.

Things being in this state, I confess I should not be sorry myself to meet Mrs. Randolph, and have the opportunity of explaining to her the inconvenience, to say the least, that she is causing. But Marietta is morbid upon the point. I suspect, too, that, without exactly acknowledging it to herself, she has a superstitious dread lest, in some way, if they were to meet, she should be compelled to leave us, and go to her aunt. I have no feeling of this kind myself. Mrs. Randolph is not a fit guide and guardian for a young girl, and I should not have the slightest scruple in setting myself entirely against such a plan. But Marietta is so conscientious, so fearful of being misled by her own inclinations, and so indifferent

to what the world may think and say of her, that she would not recognise the cogency of my arguments; and then her spirit of independence—and she has a great deal of independence—would lead her to assert the necessity of what she thinks right, and to act upon it. At any rate, the result of all this is that Marietta is not comfortable in Paris, where she has a suspicion her aunt is, and will be very glad when we leave it, as we hope to do, on Monday, on our way to Pau.

Sunday 12.—It is quite cheering to see how my dear child has rallied since Drayton came. She says it is so pleasant to be able to talk English, and to have all her little wants forestalled. I read part of the service with her and Ina this afternoon, whilst Drayton and Marietta went to church, and she joined in it without being tired; and this evening she has been in the *salon*, talking quite cheerfully, and with apparent strength; but I sent her to bed early, because of our journey to-morrow. As we turned into the Rue St. Honoré this morning, coming from church, I saw ‘Cousin John’ again, at a distance, and he was talking to a lady who certainly reminded me of Mrs. Randolph; though, as I only saw her for an instant, I may have been mistaken. A curious association, if I was correct! I suppose there may be the old family friendship as a link between them; but it cannot be good society for a young man. I am all the more glad that we are leaving Paris to-morrow; it would be emphatically embarrassing to have both of them on one’s hands here. I have had a cheering account of my darlings from Drayton, and a few lines equally satisfactory from Mrs. Bradshaw. Drayton almost thinks me a cruel mother, I can see, because I have taken her away from the little ones; but I feel more and more that it was necessary.

CHAPTER II.

Tuesday 14: Hôtel de la Poste. Angoulême.—To keep a daily journal when one is travelling is next to impossible. I desire though to note, very thankfully, that we have managed the journey so far very fairly well—not as well as I had hoped when we left England, but still, better than I anticipated in Paris. These French railways are terribly trying for an invalid as regards hours: they give you no choice; and when you are once started, I confess, so far as my experience goes, they give you very little help. If you can keep *en règle*, well and good; but if any necessity, however urgent, makes you desire to diverge, you are instantly in a sea of perplexity.

We started at twelve on Monday from Paris; an hour which suited us tolerably well, as Cecil is never good for much early in the day; but the last half-hour was mere dawdling about at the railway station—taking tickets, having luggage weighed—and the poor child was weary before she set off, because she was obliged to sit so long in a public room, with people constantly coming in and out. A ladies' waiting-room would have been an incalculable blessing. Then at Orleans we were to change trains, and there was no one to show us which way to go; and we were burdened with '*les petites bagages*,' which are absolutely necessary for an invalid's comfort—cushions, cloaks, luncheon-basket, &c.—and there were no porters to carry them, because it is supposed, of course, that all the luggage is put into the hands of the officials

at the beginning of the journey, and taken out at the end, and nothing more is required. And so we wandered about, asking questions of strong men, who always answered *là bas*, or *à droite*, and waved their hands and left us ; and really at last I was quite alarmed, for Cecil had a long way to walk, and was so hurried, that I scarcely thought she would have been able to reach the Orleans train. Once there, however, she recovered, and slept nearly the greater part of the way to Tours. This part of France is very tempting. I longed to stop at Blois and Amboise, and to make a diversion from our route to the old royal castles Chambord and Chénonceaux, but it was out of the question. Blois is extremely picturesque, built on a hill ; the old castle at one end frowning down upon the Loire, and the cathedral keeping guard at the other extremity. If one had been younger and without care, one might have spent hours in working oneself up to sympathy with historical reminiscences, and acting over again the murder of Henri le Balafré. But present anxieties are always so absorbing ; and just as we passed Blois I felt especially depressed, seeing how little Cecil could rouse herself to take any interest in the place. She is very fond of history, and a year ago she would have been quite excited by merely seeing the outer walls of the castle.

We all liked Tours extremely ; it is such a very civilised place, and the Hôtel de l'Univers was very quiet. It was scarcely in the town, but rather in a kind of Boulevard. We were too late to see anything of the town last night, and as we were all tired we went to bed early. Cecil had a wish that Marietta should sleep in the same room with her, which rather disturbs Drayton's mind, and I confess is a disappointment to myself. I would so thankfully take the entire charge of her : but she makes herself so unhappy about disturbing or tiring

me, that I am afraid she would not tell me what she wanted if I were with her.

She insisted upon our all going out together the next morning and leaving her with Drayton, and I felt that the hour's perfect quiet would be good for her ; so we went down the handsome Grande Rue to the bridge, and thus gained a general idea of the town, with its quays and planted promenades, and then lionised the cathedral. A marriage was going on, and Ina was greatly interested in the ceremonies. It is the first time she has witnessed any special service in a Roman Catholic Church, and I saw she was much struck by it. Her mind is just one of those which would be open to the fascination of a splendid ritual. It is an indolent mind, yet delighting in excitement. She likes nothing better than to sit still whilst her feelings are being played upon. Coming out of the cathedral we met an English lady and gentleman who introduced themselves to us as a Colonel and Mrs. Strangways, friends of Mr. L'Estrange. They had heard from him that we were to be in this part of the world, and Colonel Strangways had received a special charge to be of use to us if we should come in his way. Seeing our names in the visitors' book, they had intended to call on us, but we had gone out too early. This was their explanation, made very kindly, and accompanied by very hearty offers of assistance. I liked them both extremely. She is bright and amusing, but looks ill. They are on their way to Biarritz, but intend to be at Pau before long. Colonel Strangways was urgent for us to make a few long journeys instead of several short ones. He said that we might easily have been at Bordeaux to-night ; but I never like to change plans which have been well considered, and Dr. Spencer was so very strenuous as to the risk of over-fatigue for Cecil, that I cannot venture to diverge from his plan. Indeed, when the

idea was suggested, it was too late to make any alteration; so we went on our own way, leaving Tours at two o'clock, and reaching this place about seven. Too late an hour both for starting and arriving; but with these French railways, there is no such thing as choice. This place (Angoulême) is primitive and quaint, more interesting to me for that reason than Tours. But the hotel has not the same comforts. We have had a tolerable supper, cutlets and omelette as usual; but I look at the large half-furnished room with misgivings, and dread to think how Cecil will get through the night. We passed through Poitiers this afternoon, but too rapidly to take much note of it. In this part of France there is interest at every turn for an English person. But one cannot be too thankful that sunny Touraine is not ours still. Ina and Marietta have lost their hearts to Colonel and Mrs. Strangways, and it is a relief to me to feel that we shall have friends at Pau.

Wednesday, 15: Bordeaux, Hôtel de France.—We spent this morning in walking about Angoulême; for, of course, there was no hope of leaving it till two o'clock. Cecil did not pass a good night, which I was not surprised at. She got up late, and whilst Drayton was dressing her, I took the others out, and we had really a very pleasant walk round the ramparts, and along a terrace, cut in the side of the hill on which Angoulême is built, the Promenade Beaulieu, as it is aptly called. The view was extensive, yet homelike and busy, with a fresh green summer hue about the meadows, and a sparkling light upon the clear waters of the winding Charente, which gave a pervading sense of verdure, sunshine, and prosperity. I could have sat and looked at it for hours, if—a very large if—I could have cut myself adrift from all present ties, and sailed out upon those wings of imagination which some years ago would have

rendered such a scene, on such a morning (it was deliciously warm), an entrancing enjoyment. It was market day, and the town was crowded with Touraine peasants, in most elaborately embroidered white caps. How they get them,—whether they work them themselves, or, if they do not, where they find the money to purchase them, is a marvel. As we slowly made our way through the crowded *Place*, we had full opportunity for contemplating them. But wonderful as they were, they were not half as astonishing as the turkeys. There was a market for them held just in front of our hotel. This part of the world is, I believe, the nursery for *pâtés aux foies gras*, and the turkeys are made much of in consequence. I tried to forget their destination; but visions of slow fires and invalid birds, and all the other horrors one has learnt to associate with the world-famous *pâtés*, would come before me to disturb my amusement. Cecil, happily, had no such misgivings; and when we returned from our walk, we found her at the window of the *salon* laughing heartily with Drayton at the absurdity of the chattering old women who were rushing about under the trees in the *Place*, and trying to collect and keep in order the great fluttering noisy birds. It did my heart good to hear the laugh; but the rally was short-lived. A bad night tells sadly upon the dear child's strength; and when we left Angoulême it was intensely hot, and so it continued till the sun went down. Cecil slept a good deal; and, indeed, we all slept at intervals, for we had had a fatiguing morning. I am inclined to think that Colonel Strangways was right. It would have been better to take longer journeys and fewer. The constant going to and from the railway stations and settling for the night at strange hotels, with the chance of indifferent food and uncomfortable beds, is really more trying to invalids than the additional fatigue of a few hours in a railway car-

riage. Ina is the only one of the party who is satisfied that we should have made the journey as we have. She has entirely enjoyed herself, and keeps up her spirits wonderfully. It is emphatically a smiling country between Tours and Bordeaux, and it has given me an entirely new idea of France. The gentle undulations of the ground, the peaceful winding river (not the Charente, but the Dordogne), banked by willows and poplars, the broad green meadows, with cattle feeding in them, made one think of England. I don't wonder that the old Plantagenets were unwilling to relinquish their grasp of such a land. We did not reach Bordeaux till seven o'clock. I don't like the hotel. Murray says it is the best; but we have had an indifferent supper and bad attendance—very minor evils, if only Cecil can have a good night; but it seems to me as if she had lost a month's strength, even more than that, since we left England. I wish Dr. Spencer had told me more plainly all he thought.

Thursday 16: Bordeaux.—We arranged when we left Paris to have a day's rest here, and I am heartily thankful for it. Cecil's symptoms make me very uneasy. My heart misgives me sometimes as to whether it was wise to leave England at all, whether these fatiguing journeys may not have done more harm than the change of climate can do good. But I acted for the best, and under medical advice. God help me if I have been mistaken. I will try to leave it all in His Hands. Marietta says very little. I fancy she thinks—and, indeed, I believe they all think—that if they can keep me from looking anxious, I am not anxious. How little they know me! And yet we are a bright party—Cecil herself one of the brightest, when she is not over-fatigued. To-day she was quite ill all the morning; in fact, she did not leave her room till twelve; but after that she rallied,

and really, I think, enjoyed going for a drive in the afternoon. It is quite August weather. I never dream that it is October till I find the day closing in, and feel how short it has been. We are so far from comfortable here that we did not order a private dinner, but determined to try the *table d'hôte*, so we returned from the drive early in order to be ready for it. Of course Cecil dined alone. The hotel is handsome-looking, and we have good rooms, but the attendance is anything but satisfactory.

Bordeaux is a striking place. Ina flatters herself it is almost Spanish; and certainly there is an un-French look about the houses, and one constantly sees Spanish advertisements and notices put up in the windows and on the walls. I think, though, the chief impression one derives from it is that of sunshiny prosperity—a prosperity totally free from the dirt and smoke and hard work which mark our own commercial towns. The streets are broad, the houses tall and white, the *jalousies* a brilliant green. The Garonne is broad and clear, the meadows and woods on the opposite side are fresh and verdant. No doubt if one lived here and could explore the town and dive into the old parts, one should find many picturesque and dirty memorials of the old historical days when the Black Prince held his court here; but in rushing through the town, as we all did this morning, one naturally seeks only the principal streets; and the most important record of anything past, which we discovered—except the cathedral and the beautiful octagonal belfry standing detached from it—was the remarkable name of one of the chief streets, *Esprit des Lois*, making one think of Montesquieu, who (though I can't find it in Murray) must, I imagine, have been a native of Bordeaux. I noticed it especially, because it is so completely the fashion in France to obliterate the past. In Paris, when one asks,

‘Where is such a place? or when did such a thing happen?’ the only answer one receives is, ‘*Nous avons changé tout cela.*’ There was a fair going on in the suburbs, and we spent some time among the different booths, which, however, contained nothing very remarkable or inviting, except from being in some slight degree novel to our English eyes. There were shows also, with giants and harlequins; and, in fact, a fair is a fair all the world over: and but for a few Spanish figures of men and mules, there would have been little to distinguish this from a fair in England. I was standing at a stall buying a pincushion, which I thought would please Agnes, when Ina whispered in my ear, ‘Cousin John!’ and, to my extreme surprise, I saw the same gentleman we had met at the Louvre, crossing the *Place*. He recognised us, and I am quite sure his impulse was to take off his hat and claim acquaintance; and if he had lingered for a few moments, I believe mine would have been the same—I don’t mean to take off my bonnet—but to bow. The very fact of not expecting to see him in this part of the world made me feel cordially towards him. I felt we were all strangers together in this foreign part of a foreign land; but before I could recover a kind of startled shy feeling, he had turned a corner, and was gone. I imagine he is staying at the Hôtel de Londres. It is quite absurd how entirely we have made up our minds that he is John Penrhyn, when very likely he has no connection with him. It is a comfort to feel that if we are to own him as a relation, he looks like a gentleman, which is a good deal to say for an Englishman on the continent. The way young men, and old men too, often disguise themselves when they get free from what they call conventionalities (which, to my mind, mean soap and water, a clean neckcloth, and well-trimmed beard and moustache), is sur-

prising. 'Cousin John,' however, is guiltless on the score of neatness.

10 o'clock P.M.—I wrote the former part of my journal before the *table d'hôte* dinner, and thought I had finished for the day; but just as I was going to dress for dinner, 'Mr. John Penrhyn' was announced. Naturally enough we were not surprised, except at the first moment. He had found out our names from the visitors' book, and came to claim relationship. He is quite young, I should think about two or three-and-twenty, travelling, as he says, for health, as well as amusement, having overworked himself at Oxford, and being obliged in consequence to miss a term. He is staying at the Hôtel de Londres, and is on his way to Biarritz. We all liked him much. The resemblance to Bessie, which caught my attention the first day, lessens greatly on a nearer approach. There is a good deal of intellect in his face, and considerable determination. I doubt his having much poetry in his composition, but he strikes me as being perfectly simple, straightforward, and earnest. I am glad he is going to Biarritz, for I could not have him as an *attaché* to our party, and I should not know how to keep him away. He and Ina made great friends in a cousinly way, but there is nothing more awkward than cousinship; and besides—Henry Penrhyn's son! I am thankful he is to be at Biarritz. I did not ask him how long he meant to stay.

The result of our interview was a good deal of worry about our travelling plans. The line is not yet opened to Pau; and as the best route, we had settled to go by railway to Tarbes, sleep there, and drive to Pau—about forty miles, I fancy—the next day. In fact, I had written to Pau to order a carriage and horses to be sent over to Tarbes for us. But John Penrhyn, who is learned in Bradshaw, assures me that we cannot leave Bordeaux till two in the afternoon, and cannot reach Tarbes till eleven at night—a

great deal too late for Cecil. And he says, also, that we shall find no good accommodation at Tarbes, and strongly advises us to stop at Aire, a town an hour or more short of Tarbes, and drive over to Pau the next day from thence. I believe that will be about fifty miles, but anyhow it will be better than keeping the dear child up so late. He was very good-natured about it, and undertook to telegraph the change of route to Pau, and I hope it will be all right ; but I feel as if we had been blundering, and ought to have understood our own plans better. Marietta is extremely vexed about it all, because we rather depend upon her, and the explanations which she gives of the continental Bradshaw—more puzzling far, I am convinced, than Euclid. And up to this time she has managed admirably for us. She is half unhappy, half angry, when she has made a blunder, and is inclined to exaggerate my unfortunate vexed looks, and to think that I lay the blame upon her, when, in fact, I lay it all upon myself. These difficulties, and Cecil's being so worn by the journey, make me feel as if a black cloud hung over Bordeaux, in spite of its sunniness.

CHAPTER III.

Pau : October 21, 18 . . —We have been here since last Saturday, the 18th. To-day is Tuesday. The journey to Aire was a trial. John Penrhyn called in the morning, and insisted upon going to the railway station with us, and seeing us off, and I thought all would be satisfactory. But it was a longer journey than I anticipated, and we had once (I forget where) to change trains in the dark, and the rushing about, and asking questions which received no answer, and losing each other, and tiring ourselves with carrying the endless *petites bagages*, added to my extreme anxiety for Cecil, were very far from pleasant. The only interest, while there was daylight, was to be found in the fact that we were passing through the Landes ; pine woods and heaths stretching for miles and miles, unvaried in monotony, but impressive from their extent—the ash-coloured sandy soil giving a peculiar but very sombre colour to the scenery. As we drew near Aire I began to have misgivings about our accommodation for the night. We had telegraphed for rooms from Bordeaux, but it was possible that the telegram had not been received ; for this part of the world is only in the infancy of railway civilisation. A very kind elderly gentleman, travelling with an invalid daughter, cheered me by bright expectations ; but when we reached the station, and drove through the wretched town, in a shaky omnibus, and stopped at the entrance of the hotel, I was very uneasy. The place looked so poor, so utterly unfit for Cecil ; and

she, poor darling, was extremely tired, and needing every comfort. I felt sure some mistake had been made, especially when we heard that no telegram had been received. However, it was, as we were told, the only decent hotel in the town, and our friend advised us strongly, if we could find anything like sleeping accommodation, to accept it, for we were certainly likely to fare worse elsewhere. He himself got out first and went in; and when he came back he told us that the rooms were clean, and the people civil; and upon the strength of this assurance we alighted.

As was to be expected, the floors were uncarpeted, and the beds uncurtained (we were probably all the better off for that), but it was a very dreary prospect for an invalid, after a long late journey, it being then nearly ten o'clock. There were but three rooms to be had. Cecil went to bed directly. The rest of us thought first of supper, for we were very hungry. But there really was nothing in the house, except bread and perfectly uneatable butter. We could get no meat, no eggs. Cecil had a fancy for tea, which we unwisely ordered instead of coffee, and found it totally undrinkable. Happily we had some cold chicken and preserves in our luncheon basket, and by that aid we contrived to make a tolerable meal, which was also rather a merry one; for we had it in Cecil's room, sitting at a table drawn close to the bed; and as she was then resting and comfortable, and able to eat a little herself, we were all cheered, and went to bed afterwards delighting in the thought that the next day was to be the last of our journeyings.

A lovely morning followed, but no carriage had come for us from Pau, and I was in dread lest we should be detained at Aire, and obliged to spend Sunday there. Our friend and his daughter were more fortunate, and went off early. I suppose they had known their own

minds better than we had. The hotel was a pleasant little country inn, with a bright garden. We breakfasted late, upon rather better materials than had been forthcoming the night before, and managed to wile away an hour or two; and at last, to my extreme joy, the carriage was announced, and we started for our drive, the people at the inn insisting upon our carrying away a partridge as a present for the invalid young lady. A long long drive that was, not wholly without interest since it was new, but in no way striking till we caught sight of the Pyrenees, jagged in outline, soft in colouring, in parts snow-capped. Mountains are always an indescribable delight to me. Ina clapped her hands in ecstasy. Cecil gazed at the hills, and I saw that her eyes filled with tears, and I sat quite silent, and felt too much for thought. Marietta turned to me and said, 'When I last looked at mountains they were the Alps.' And the words pained me, for it seemed—perhaps it was only seeming—that she must be still pining for Italy, and the ties of relationship, which, with all our love, we can never claim.

We drove into Pau through one of those long, straight poplar avenue roads which one meets with everywhere in France, and which entirely destroy all romance. Even the mountains scarcely looked interesting when seen as a background. Then came something more picturesque—the old castle, the birthplace of Henri Quatre, and the moat and woods adjoining; then a rather dirty and uninteresting and bustling part of the town, with no peculiarities of architecture to make it endurable; and then a long, broad street stretching quite into the country, and composed of very motley houses—some large, some small, some standing back in gardens, some opening directly upon the road; altogether very like fifty other streets which one has seen once, and never wishes to see again.

This was the Rue Porte Neuve, considered a very good situation ; for Pau varies extremely in this respect, and some parts of the town, I fancy, are positively unhealthy.

We were received at the *porte cochère* by our landlady, an Englishwoman, who has lived in France till she speaks her native tongue with a French accent. But she is English in feeling, and taste, and understanding, and has managed to make us extremely comfortable. Our rooms are rather high up, but then they command a most fascinating view, for we look over a garden at once to the mountains. The Pic du Midi, the Pic de Gers, the Pené d'Aube, the Arriers Grand, all stand before us, with the Brèche de Roland and the Cauterets. To look at them for a few minutes before breakfast, and then sit down together domestically, as on ordinary occasions, is quite sufficient romance. I never before realised so fully what the character of scenery is—its individuality. These Pyrenees are so wholly unlike the Alps, they are so quiet in colouring, so refined, one might almost say feminine in hue and outline. The very strength and sharpness they possess, and which one can quite see, seems toned down. They have power, doubtless, but power which they would be unwilling to use. I have observed as yet no great contrasts of colour, no dark shadows, or bright lights. A lovely purple haze hangs about their base, while the peaks are a soft grey, almost melting into white, even when no snow is upon them. The Pic du Midi stands apart, not as if lording it over inferiors, but with a calm sense of pre-eminence, which yet willingly admits that there may be others in other places surpassing it. Altogether, I have seldom looked upon anything more soothing. Marietta and Ina go into raptures of imagination as they talk of Spain, which being on the southern side of the mountains, they picture to themselves as a land of perpetual sunshine. But I have no wish to go beyond my

present home, where we have every comfort, and, what is just now in itself the embodiment of all comforts for me—rest. We have a small but pretty *salon* with three south bedrooms adjoining, and two other large rooms at the back. Cecil, of course, has the best of the south rooms, and I don't think there is anything more to wish for for her; she really could not be better off. Marietta, too, luxuriates in a southern aspect, and has seemed quite invigorated since she has turned her face to the sunny side of this dark world. I don't know what to say and think of Cecil. Dr. Cole came yesterday, and looks grave, but he will not say much. She has certainly rallied since we came, and has quite enjoyed one or two drives, but I cannot help seeing, though I do not say so to anyone, that every day shows some slight diminution of strength. I question if the doctors, any of them, quite know what is the matter with her. There has been no return of hæmorrhage since we left England, which is a good sign. One thing I remark is, a tendency to irritability, quite unlike herself. I know no one less irritable than Cecil, by nature. It distresses her very much, and she complains to me about it, and says it makes her feel so wicked. But I do not let her be severe with herself. If man can be merciful to such a natural infirmity, I am sure God will be; and to me it is a marked symptom of disease, one amongst many. I have had letters from England. The most important one, which makes me quite happy about the children, is from Mrs. Bradshaw.

Beechwood: October 14.—MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have been calculating times and seasons, and have made out to my satisfaction that you are just arrived at Pau. My mind travels after you, and brings back word that a letter from Beechwood would be the most acceptable gift you could receive on first settling in your new home. Don't think I

am grown conceited in my old age. I don't suspect you of inordinate love for me, but only of ordinary love for your little pets, who are the very delight of my heart, and as good as gold. This, by-the-bye, is saying very little for them, considering that gold is not of much use till it is coined; and when it is, it is the root of all evil. But it was the first simile which came into my head, and I had not time to think of a better. I have had one fit of passion from Hugh; but I placed him on a high chair, and left him to scream by himself, and he soon grew tired of the sound of his own voice; and when he was tolerably quiet, I put him into bed—a very soothing punishment—and he sobbed himself to sleep, and woke up, as he told me, quite good. Bonnie little Essie is never out of humour; in that way she makes me think of Cecil. But Agnes, my dear friend; what do you intend to do with her? She would rival St. Theresa in scruples and devotion. I see nothing for her but a sisterhood; I don't say a convent, because that would shock your Protestantism; but in my secret heart I am convinced that her nature is the stuff out of which nuns are made, and that she never will be satisfied till she is a nun. She possesses precisely the magnifying power required in order to go into hysterics of grief, because she has eaten three mouthfuls when she ought only to have taken two. A little saint she is unquestionably; but, my dear, if you don't take care she will some day drive herself and everybody about her wild. Don't think I am hard upon her, or inclined to laugh at her. God forbid. I say it in all earnestness. She is a continual sermon to me; but then she certainly was not made for this rough world, and it is a constant labour, and an interest too, to teach her to suit herself to it. You know my household is not like yours: we are not such patterns of order and propriety; and my son, a most worthy man, and a good Christian too, is still a man

and a soldier, and gives his off-hand opinions, and speaks out hastily. Moreover, he delights in teasing, and rejoices in mystifying your poor little woman, and making her think he means something very dreadful, when he really means nothing. And she is so profoundly reverent! She thinks it a grievous sin to imagine that anyone five-and-twenty years older than herself can say what is wrong, let alone a married man and a papa; and what with her conscientiousness, her love of truth, and the colonel's naughtiness, her poor little mind is in a perpetual bewilderment. I laugh—I can't help it—but I am vexed too; and I tell you about it that you may understand, in case the poor child should pour out her griefs. I can't keep my son in order—I never could (there is a confession for you); and men never can understand the suffering they inflict upon these ultra-sensitive morbid little beings. To them it is all play, and they no more believe that the children really suffer, than the fisherman believes the worm suffers when he sees it writhing on the hook. I wish, though, I could think that your dear child did not suffer more acutely than the worm. She does not writhe, but she blushes; and well I remember myself (it was in the days before the flood, and before I grew hardened and yellow) what pain that was. We had quite a scene yesterday; it was at luncheon. We were talking of some old acquaintances—Indian people—especially of a widow, no longer a widow, but married again, to a man much younger than herself. The colonel censured the marriage, and declared he had a great objection to Indian widows, and thought it a great pity the Suttee was abolished. Agnes raised her little voice just above a whisper, and asked Miss Marchmont (the governess) what the Suttee was. The colonel heard, and answered: 'it was a very excellent Indian custom: widows burnt themselves with their husbands' dead bodies on a funeral pile,

and so a great many disagreeable people were got rid of.' You can imagine how Agnes looked! How those large deep violet eyes opened, and what a mist of horror gathered over them! The colonel repeated and emphasised his assertion, putting on his gravest face, and Agnes did not speak, but only looked; and the naughty colonel went on to declare that he should get up a petition to Parliament for the restoration of the Suttee; and Agnes turned from one to the other, and received no help or comfort from anyone, for we were all at the moment 'wickedly bent,' and enjoyed her perplexity. At last there came actual tears, and I was obliged to interfere, and explain. But the poor little thing could not recover herself, and rushed away to her own room before luncheon was over, to get out of the way of the colonel's *badinage*. I give you this as a specimen. In all other respects we are getting on admirably. Miss Marchmont puts Agnes at the head of her list of good children, and says she has excellent abilities. As for our own little ones, they are enchanted to have companions, and cannot scream loudly or long enough to express their delight. And dear simple Marian looks up at me with her bright vacant eyes, and asks, 'how can Mrs. Anstruther manage to make her children so obedient?' By-the-bye, when you find time for thought, tell me what is the attraction which sensible men find in silly women. It is a problem I have been trying to solve ever since my son took to himself a wife.

'No room for village news to-day, as there is no scandal: you know one can always find a corner for that. I dread the sight of Harry Anson's face when he returns and finds Marietta fled. I am convinced he is true to his old love, because Mrs. Harcourt has set on foot a report that Miss Randolph is gone abroad with the intention of joining her aunt. 'Thy wish was father, Harry, to that thought.' I say nothing about Cecil. If she is better,

you know well how my heart will rejoice. If not—my dear friend, I shall put your name into my prayers, and hers into my thanksgivings. No one will understand that better than yourself. My hearty greetings to all. I feel sure Marietta is more fond of me now she is away from me. Tell her so, with my best love: yes, best, for she deserves the best.

‘Yours ever affectionately,

‘C. BRADSHAW.’

Mrs. Bradshaw is right: Agnes is not fit for this world. I have long realised that fact. My business is to make her fit, so far as I can. How?—is the difficulty. I suspect the deficiency is intellectual. Certainly one would not willingly make her less conscientious; and, therefore, one cannot be perpetually laughing at her. But it may be possible to educate her reasoning powers, to make her see where one duty ends and another begins, which is really her great puzzle. Also, and very especially, she must learn to understand a joke. I daresay this winter with Mrs. Bradshaw will be very good for her. It will educate her in a way which I could never do myself, and it will make her feel what a man’s mind is, and that is what she very much needs. She has always lived with women, and the effect is narrowing. Ina and Cecil learnt something of the world at school; it was one of the advantages they had there, though it was counter-balanced by much that was objectionable. They did not actually see, but they heard of other spheres besides their own. Agnes lives only in Dernham, and, humanly speaking, believes first, if not exclusively, in me. Most charming as she is in her exquisite purity and simplicity, I cannot let her be pre-Raphaelite in character. It might have done very well for the thirteenth century, but this is the nineteenth, and ‘to do one’s duty in that

century' to which God has called one, is as important as to do it in 'that station of life.' If I should be spared to return home, I must set to work to make Agnes think, and that not by always reading the books with which I entirely agree, but sometimes those from which I, in some points, differ. In the meantime I accept thankfully the training which circumstances, through God's Providence, are giving her. As for the little ones, I am quite satisfied about them. I am sure they could not be better off; but I have intense longings to see them. Charlie writes me word that he is 'really trying,' which implies a good deal, though there might be two very different interpretations put upon the words. Mr. Pierce very kindly adds a few words to assure me that my boy is getting on well in his studies, and that he hopes he will soon be fit for a public school. Charlie also says that Frank Neville is jollier than ever, and that he hopes I shall meet Mr. Neville abroad. I am sure I hope not, at least if he is to be accompanied by Henry Anson. But abroad is a very wide term. It may mean Siberia or Egypt.

CHAPTER IV.

Pau : October 28.—Marietta, Ina, and I went to-day to the old castle, and saw everything that was to be seen—Henri Quatre's tortoiseshell cradle, and the room in which he was born, Jeanne d'Albret's bedroom, and a screen worked by her, a good deal of Gobelin tapestry, a casket which belonged to St. Louis; also many reminders of the existence of Napoleon III., who takes the whole under his protection, only begging in return that he may be considered *one of the family*. The view from the gardens over the river, and the Côteaux, or lower hills, to the Pyrenees, is most lovely, though there is the dirty town for a foreground. Pau is not clean, and not interesting in itself, especially on market days; as I felt yesterday when Ina and I made our way to the post-office through the midst of crowds of peasants. I was not prepared for such a large straggling place. But the walks belonging to the castle, and extending along the side of a low hill bordering the Bayonne road, are lovely. Such sunshine we had to-day, such lovely lights amongst the autumnal-tinted trees, with the old castle and the mountains peering behind them! The sun was so powerful that I could not bear to sit down and have it pouring upon me. But Ina and Marietta were more sun-proof, and at last I left them together whilst I walked up and down in the shade. When I returned I found them, to my surprise, talking to Colonel and Mrs. Strangways, who have just arrived from Biarritz, which they say is rather too exposed in all


ways to please them ; and besides, they had engaged their house, and were therefore obliged to take possession of it. It is a great drawback to all these foreign watering-places, that one cannot engage an *appartement* except for the season, between five and six months ; and so if the place does not suit one, it remains on hand, unless one is fortunate enough to underlet it. I am glad, myself, of anything which brings Colonel and Mrs. Strangways to Pau, for I was beginning to feel dreary and companionless. In the course of conversation, Marietta and Mrs. Strangways found out they had mutual friends,—friends also of Mrs. Randolph's. I do not know that I am quite glad of this ; for anything which brings up Mrs. Randolph's name tends to disturb Marietta's mind, and waken that morbid conscientiousness, I cannot call it anything else, which makes her think that she ought to make a greater effort to find out where her aunt is, and go to her.

October 31.—My precious Cecil has become suddenly much weaker ; no one can tell why. Dr. Cole is greatly alarmed. He thought he should startle me, but I have felt the truth ever since we left England. It is a question of time only. Yet, till the day before yesterday, she was driving out, and sometimes seemed to enjoy it. One day she wanted to go to a shop, and was really interested in choosing some moss-rose buds for her hat. It went to my heart to watch her as they were brought out to her, and she looked them over. She was not strong enough to go into the shop. I don't think she knows at all how ill she is now, and I must tell her. That is my trial. She is very reserved about her illness ; yet she has long had doubts about ever getting well. I am quite happy about her. No one can have watched her for the last two years without seeing where her heart is fixed. Faults she has naturally, so we all have ; but looking back upon that time, I could not name any one to which she

has in the least given way. It has been a quiet, calm, silent walking with God, as a child; quite simple, quite bright and untroubled, though watchful and earnest. Hers is not a mind to disturb itself by questions and scruples. She has grown so lovely! The fresh ruddiness of health indeed is gone, but the colour is bright still; the outline of the face is softened, the expression deepened. When I see her resting against Ina and caressing her, as she sometimes will when she feels better, the two faces seem to me like the faces of angels. For Ina is so touched, so thoughtful now. She does not yet realise what is before her, but the shadow is upon her.

I heard the doctor's opinion in a way which was painful. I had not been very well, and when he came, rather earlier than usual, Marietta and Drayton saw him, for I was not up. I was not aware that there was so great a change. I had noticed the day before that Cecil was weaker, but Drayton, in speaking of her then, only said it was one of her bad days, and neither of us suspected anything worse than a temporary falling back.


In the afternoon Marietta proposed to go for a walk with me, and we went by some lanes towards Bilhères, a kind of country-house close to Pau. The weather was delicious. We have had torrents of rain at intervals lately, and it has been very cold; but to-day the brightness and warmth were perfectly exquisite. We were walking through English-looking lanes, bordered by hedgerows and trees, and leading us through green meadows, and by cottages, and occasional villas, and the pleasant sense of home and rest came over me; and when I turned towards the south the long range of the purple mountains brought a thrill of romance and wonder which carried me back to the exciting days of youth; and suddenly, when the quietness was stealing over me, making its way into my heart, Marietta turned to me and said: 'I must tell you;



I have been afraid to do so. Dr. Cole thinks Cecil alarmingly weaker.' I think I answered quietly. I could not have said what I felt. No one can describe what it is which makes the sun's brightness mockery, and converts the perception of beauty into an aching pain. And I think, too, I was hurt. It was no one's fault, but I felt as if I ought not to have learnt the truth from anyone but Dr. Cole himself. Marietta was—what she always is—most sympathising and helpful, as far as that was possible. But I can speak to no one of what I feel for Cecil. She is not my own child: that is what every one thrusts before me. There is an unconscious coldness in their tone. Marietta understands me best; but even she cannot tell what that special place in my heart is which this child occupies, and which no one else can fill. Not that I wish her to live; no, I do not; I can say that in all truth. I give her to God willingly, thankfully. I give her also to her dear father and mother, without a wish to keep her back. They have long waited for her, and theirs is the first claim. But the child is mine in a sense in which she can belong to no other person. I have laboured for her, thought for her, prayed for her (alas, not prayed as I might and ought!) I have, as it were, made her mine by the care and the love—the deep, deep love, never to be expressed, which I have lavished upon her, without a hope of its being perceived, and scarcely of its being returned. For love descends, it does not ascend. The old love the young, as the young can never love the old. And though my darling has given me many fond words and loving caresses, and has joyed to be with me, and felt happier in my approbation than she has ever been with others' praise; yet she has never understood, she never could understand, how my heart has thrilled as I have watched her growing reverence for holy things, her strict conscientiousness, her little daily

acts of self-control and thoughtfulness; and how my love has poured itself out in intensity of earnestness as I have given her my calm, customary evening blessing. All these things are known only to God. To the world, my Cecil is only my step-child; and people will satisfy themselves by saying to each other, even if they never say it to me, how much more terrible it would have been for me if I had lost Agnes. But it is all for the best. There is One who knows: One who can feel and understand. I will speak to Him.

October 29.—Cecil was so very tired last night that I could not say anything to her. To-day I felt that I must do so; and she was better able to bear it. She came into the *salon* as usual. She has never given that up; and she really sits up tolerably late; and until the last few days, she has seemed to enjoy being in the next room to us when we were at dinner in the little ante-room. This evening Marietta and Ina left me alone with her, and then I led the conversation round by degrees, and broke to her Dr. Cole's opinion. I was obliged to do it very gently. I could not say to her then, as he said to me this morning, that the end might come very rapidly; but I suggested that it might be a comfort to her to see a clergyman, and to receive the Holy Communion; and she agreed, and did not shrink from the idea of a private service, which is generally so painful to young people; and then I went on further, and spoke of her present actual state, and her increasing weakness; and at last she seemed to wake up to the perception of its real danger. But even now I question whether she realises it as immediate. Perhaps it is better she should not. Even in cases where one has to rouse a slumbering conscience, which, thank God, is not the case with her, there must always be a doubt of the reality of the feeling which has its source in the fear of death. My dear



child's deep sense of sinfulness, and loving trust in her Redeemer, are too sincere to be affected by the question of months and days. She has lived with God, and she is ready to go to Him. Until lately she has been able to read a little at night herself, and has had her own time for prayers; but to-night we settled that I should read to her after she was in bed. It is a marked step on the descending road; but it is a great comfort to me to have this regular season for being with her alone.

October 30.—I have been trying to find an English clergyman to visit Cecil. It was not easy, for there have been changes and divisions in the ecclesiastical arrangements here, and the English Church in Pau is in a state of transition. I went to the Strangways for advice, and found them most kind. They know a good many people, and I know no one but themselves, and one or two persons to whom they have introduced me. They told me where the chaplain lived; it was at the other end of the town, quite a long walk. I went there with Ina, but he was not at home, so I have been obliged to write to him. I went back to the Strangways afterwards, and they asked Ina to stay and dine with them. They have taken a great fancy to her. I was only too glad to say 'yes;' for I dread the effect of all this watching and anxiety. Ina sees now quite plainly how the case stands; indeed, she asked me yesterday what Dr. Cole thought, and then, of course, I told her. She feels it all bitterly, and would willingly spend every moment with Cecil, but I will not allow it. It would be bad for her in every way. I think she understands even better than Marietta what my love for Cecil is, and this draws us much together. But a young mind cannot bear up against the pressure of a constant heavy grief as an older one can. Ina's health would very quickly suffer without something to cheer her. She brought back a piece of news which just a

little disturbs me. A report has reached Mrs. Strangways through a friend that Mrs. Randolph is in Spain, at Madrid, and very ill and lonely. The intelligence does not appear to have a very good foundation, and at first I was inclined to beg Ina to say nothing about it to Marietta till it could be inquired into, and denied or corroborated; but, upon second thoughts, I felt it best to keep nothing back. Mysteries and reserves, unless absolutely necessary, almost invariably work for evil; and what I have always to remind myself of is that Marietta is her own mistress. She must judge and decide for herself as to what she is called upon to do. And if she were to find out that I had in any way hidden things from her, all her confidence in me would be gone; and without confidence where would be our love? But if she were to go from us? If we were to lose both her and Cecil? To go back to Dernham without either! What would Ina do? What should I do? How faithless one is!

CHAPTER V.

November 1.—Festival of All Saints—a day on which we always have service at Dernham. It seemed strange and lonely to be without it here, and I did what some people might have misunderstood, only there was no one here to know me. As I came back from the Strangways, I went into one of the open churches, and knelt down amongst the few peasants who were worshipping there, and had a soothing half hour by myself. I needed it, for I had been greatly distressed. There is a slight, very slight, and only occasional wandering in my darling's mind. She has fancies about the things and people near her. This morning she begged to have a parcel sent to Mrs. Strangways, and imagined it was lying on the bed. And the fear of distressing and paining me is exaggerated at times almost to irritability. The disease is apparently in some way affecting the brain. I must try to bear it: but words can never tell how lonely and sad it makes me to feel that others may venture to go near her at all times, and that I have to be careful and watch for opportunities. Drayton and Marietta are invaluable; but I would give worlds to be able to do all that they do. And I had another trouble to-day about Marietta. I told her what Mrs. Strangways had heard; and I saw it made a great impression upon her. She would not leave me now, I know; but she spoke of the possibility of going to Spain, by-and-by. We both of us knew too well what by-and-by meant. All that can be done at present is to

try and obtain some more definite intelligence. One thing I am quite determined upon—that if Mrs. Randolph is with Lady Chase, Marietta shall not go to her alone.

November 12.—Still waiting and watching. Ina feels it terribly. I took her with me this afternoon for a drive to the Côteau de Jurançon, and very lovely it was; a wooded hill of moderate height, studded with villas; and from the terrace, in front of the Château de Perpignan, a most splendid view of the Pyrenees, with a foreground of wood and valley. This is the first really pleasant day we have had for the last fortnight. Generally speaking, it has been rainy and very cold, with frequent fogs, quite home-like! People say there has not been such a bad autumn at Pau for the last thirteen years. I hope, for the credit of the climate, they are correct. Happily, we are very comfortable in our rooms. Our English landlady boards us, and we can get everything we want for Cecil at a moment's notice, which would be impossible if we were in regular lodgings. Ina tells me that Marietta has been worrying herself about her aunt ever since she knew that I thought I saw her in Paris, and that she wishes very much she had asked John Penrhyn whether he really was with her; but the fuss about the journey put it out of her head at the time, and since then she has been reproaching herself. I wish Marietta would say out to me everything which is in her mind, as she does to Ina. She thinks it saves me pain to keep things back; but it is just the reverse. This Spanish notion must have taken a stronger hold of her than I had imagined. Ina tells me that when they went yesterday to the Strangways, Marietta took her to Lafon's, in the Rue Henri Quatre, and bought a Spanish grammar and vocabulary.

English letters satisfactory.

November 18.—The darling child is sinking fast. It is inexpressibly grievous to me to be obliged to leave the

task of nursing to others, though they do it far better than I should; but I have my few quiet moments at night, which no one can interfere with; and so also I always read with her a very little in the morning. She does not say much; but she rests calmly in the sense of her Saviour's love. At first she had a wish to live; but that feeling is gone now. There is still the slight wandering of the mind occasionally; but she soon seems to recover from it. It is strange to me to watch her singularly increasing beauty. The flush of fever on her cheeks prevents her from having the ghastly look of disease; and she has become so etherealised—it is the only expression I can use—I can scarcely now recall her as the ruddy, strong English girl, whom one would only have noticed as being so pleasant and good-humoured-looking. We have been very anxious for her photograph to be taken ever since we came, but she has never been well enough for it, and now we are obliged to content ourselves with a copy of one taken before she left England, which one of the good photographers here is to colour. We allowed him to see her this morning at his own request, that he might judge of the colour of her hair and eyes. He quite started when he came into the room and saw her lying in bed with a beautiful colour on her cheeks, and her face brightened by a momentary surprise and amusement. ‘*Ah, la belle Anglaise!*’ he exclaimed. He could scarcely be made to believe how very seriously ill she is.

Mr. Benson, the clergyman, is very kind, and the dear child likes him, and talks a little to him, which is a great comfort. Two days ago we had the blessing of the Holy Communion, and Cecil kept up wonderfully, but she has gone down many degrees since.

November 21.—I thought last night that it would be all over—our darling was so very, very ill; and yet she did not keep her bed. She came into the *salon*, indeed, and

sat up for nearly an hour; but after that there was a great change, and we were dreadfully alarmed. She knew something of her own state, and begged that Mr. Benson might be sent for to-day, that she might once more receive the Holy Communion; and I wrote the note that it might go to him the first thing in the morning; but at the moment I scarcely thought that she would live to see the morning.

She did rally again, however, astonishingly. Dr. Cole marvelled when he came and saw her, for he left her last night with great misgivings. Mr. Benson was with us about twelve, and she bore the service well. In the afternoon she even begged to be taken out of bed and laid upon the sofa. When I came into the room at five o'clock, I found her tossing about and moaning. Almost her first words to me were, 'Is it wrong to moan?' And, again, when, in a sudden fit of uneasiness, she had said, 'I must' have something done, she asked directly, 'Is it wrong to say, I must?' Poor darling! she is so entirely the little child in her simple obedience and humility. She was more comfortable afterwards, and for the first time for many weeks the cloud of reserve passed away, and a whole torrent of pent-up feeling and love came out in a few words. Her heart clings greatly to Dernham. It has been her one knowledge of home; and but that so many whom she loves are with her, it would be hard to die in a foreign land. But she thinks of the little ones; and such an untold regret and tenderness there was in her tone as, after talking with her of home, and receiving her few messages, she exclaimed suddenly, 'And Agnes, mamma, Agnes, I can't say it all, but you know it;' and, looking up, she clasped her hands, as if it was impossible for words to tell the feeling she longed to express. Ina has been a great deal with her. The sister's love is very precious. Ina is just beginning to under-

stand what she is losing ; but Cecil's earnest words will be more valuable, I fully believe, than even her living example. I made Marietta and Drayton lie down this afternoon ; they both needed it very much : though there has been no actual night watching hitherto, yet their rest has been continually disturbed. Now they are with her, and I am going to bed, for she is comparatively quiet and at ease, and we all think she may still linger on for a day or two.

November 22.—God has taken our darling to her rest. I was called up by Drayton about half-past two o'clock, and told that there was a great change not to be mistaken. She was perfectly conscious to the last—almost more than conscious—for there was something in her tone and words which told of a spirit that was raised quite above earth. She mentioned the servants at home, and begged Drayton to tell them that, with her dying breath, she had prayed for them all ; and then she prayed for those she loved ; for me, with a special recognition of all I had been to her, and a petition that God would soon take me to Himself, for she knew I should be happier ; and for Ina, and Marietta, and the little ones, and for her grandmother and aunts, in language marvellously beyond her natural powers ; yet so simply, so fervently, with such wonderful reality ! it was speaking to her Saviour, knowing, not merely *believing*, that He was near. She begged us not to grieve for her, and, looking up, said, 'kiss me ;' and so we all kissed her, and then she sent a message to Mr. Benson. 'Tell Mr. Benson how I thank him ; that I have thought of him now, and that he has helped me very much.' I believed at that moment that the end was very near ; but it was not, and there was terrible suffering before it came, suffering which tried her to the very utmost. Once she began the verse in the 'Christian Year' for the Wednesday before Easter :—

O Lord my God, do Thou Thy holy will—
I will lie still,
I will not stir, lest I forsake Thine arm,
And break the charm
Which lulls me, clinging to my Father's breast,
In perfect rest.

She could not quite remember it, and I helped her; and the earnestness with which the words, 'in perfect rest,' were uttered, I shall never, never forget; there was such an intense longing for it: and yet she made such efforts to be patient, praying that God would make her patient, and saying, 'Thy will be done.'

She asked us when we thought it would be over, and was told that probably she would live till the dawn; and then she made us watch the clock on the mantelpiece, counting the weary hours as they went by. Once her mind wandered back to Dernham. She thought herself there; and she must have remembered the sunrise from the front bedroom, for she said, 'There must be a line of light over the sea. Do you see it?' I did not quite understand her, and thinking she was only speaking as if absent from Dernham, I answered, 'Yes; so there will be.' 'Ah!' she said, 'then He is coming.' But she waited for Him still many long minutes; and, at length, she murmured, like a little child, 'My eyes are heavy: may I close them?' and those were her last words. When the dawn did appear, she went home. As I passed through the corridor to go to my own room when all was over, I saw the light breaking over the sky.

CHAPTER VI.

November 23.—To-day has been full of most painful business and letters. The funeral is to be on Monday. This is in accordance with the regulations of the country, but it unsettles and distresses one. I have seen Colonel and Mrs. Strangways; I went there in the dusk last night. They have had further news of Mrs. Randolph, and felt that I ought to be told at once, and it was better for me to go to them, as I could talk more freely. Drayton and Marietta are nearly worn out; Ina tries to keep up, but it is a terrible wrench. I can't write about Mrs. Randolph—I can't write about anything. It seems all a dream. But I would not have my darling back, God knows; and in the midst of my heartache I can see the truth of what she herself said in a little note to Agnes, 'all is very well with me.'

Wednesday, November 26.—Business crowds upon me. It is as well it should. The rapidity with which the past has become past is something unspeakably trying. Sunday was left us for thought—even that would not have been allowed us if the day had not been Sunday. Monday was—I cannot attempt to say what. But I had one comfort, I settled everything myself, and arranged with my own hands the flowers laid on my darling's coffin. I could not bear to have help, and Marietta and Ina were quite ill. My child seemed, in a measure, restored to me when she was dressed for her grave. I stood by her and looked at her, so calm and lovely as she was; and

felt that there could be no fretting disease, no momentary irritability to disturb us. She was, and she is, mine now, as she has never been before, because I feel, if she thinks of me at all, it must be with a full and perfect comprehension of my love. The rest this consciousness gives is indescribable. What the pain of the last few weeks has been I feel now by contrast.

We walked to the cemetery. My darling rests in a far corner, under the shelter of a wall, which will soon be covered with ivy and creepers. I am content that she should be there, though my fond longing was to carry her back to Dernham.

Colonel and Mrs. Strangways were with us. They have been most kind and sympathising in every way. I went to them again quite late on Monday evening. We agreed that nothing should be said to Marietta about her aunt till Tuesday. The intelligence is perplexing. It seems, from what Mrs. Strangways has heard from a cousin at Biarritz, that Mrs. Randolph was there a short time ago with some friends, very respectable people, of the name of Davidson. Now they have quarrelled; and report says that Mrs. Randolph is in Spain—alone, and extremely ill: but where she is, this cousin seems unable to state exactly. Madrid appears to have been only suggested as a possibility. I do not see the claim that Mrs. Randolph has upon Marietta in the light in which Marietta sees it herself; but I do not feel justified in combating her strong desire to see her aunt. With her very peculiar independent mind, I am convinced she would ultimately follow her own idea of duty, whatever I might say; and the only question therefore is whether I shall help her or leave her to herself. Even if I did not love her as dearly as I do, the events of the last few weeks have so strengthened the tie which binds her to me, that it is quite impossible for me to throw her upon her own resources. She

has been my child quite as much as Ina, and as such I must think and act for her as her mother.

I said thus much to Mrs. Strangways, and the question then naturally arose, What did I intend to do? If necessary, go to Spain. I have seen that conclusion looming before me for some time. But first I propose writing to Biarritz, and obtaining some more definite information from the Davidsons. We must stay in Pau another week; there are so many things to be arranged. During that time we may hear definitely where Mrs. Randolph is. When I stated my intentions to Mrs. Strangways, she most thoughtfully and kindly proposed what, in the event of the Spanish journey, would obviate one of its greatest difficulties, to keep Ina with her till I return. Drayton, she says, can go home under the escort of a friend of hers who is on the point of returning to England. I was, I cannot say how, thankful for the proposition. I have dreaded all along the necessity of discussing plans with Marietta, and allowing her to see the inconveniences to which I should be put if I went with her. She would then have insisted upon going alone, or doing something equally wild. The passionate, excitable Italian feeling shows itself occasionally in a way which is incomprehensible to our colder northern temperament: and Marietta's one weakness would be heroic self-sacrifice.

She was so tired and ill, poor child! on Monday evening, that, even if I had wished it, I could not have introduced the subject. On Tuesday I insisted upon taking her for a drive. Ina could not make up her mind to go, and I sent her over to Mrs. Strangways instead. Marietta and I drove to the Côteau de Gelos. A more perfect home view I never looked upon. If it had been clear, we should have seen the Pic du Midi, and the Pic de Gers, at the end of the valley leading to Eaux-Bonnes, but the distant mountains were all covered with clouds. The hills which

were visible were snowy: white mists with a tint of pale rose floated at their base. Still nearer the atmosphere was purple and autumnal. In the foreground were steep declivities, clothed with golden woods, varied by some lingering remains of summer green; the whitened, moss-grown, lichen-covered trunks rising up boldly from amongst them. Little white cottages nestled in the ravines, and were dotted about on the sides of the hills; and home-like villas, standing in gardens, gave an English air to the very exquisite landscape, only lost when one looked at the snow, and thought of the grim peaks hidden from sight.

Marietta was soothed and cheered by the beauty. She said but little; for we have lived long enough together to enjoy the intimacy of silence. When we did speak, it was to allude to our darling, though we could neither of us bring ourselves to name her. Yet I have talked, and do talk, of her to Mrs. Strangways; it is my great comfort; but Marietta is too near; we feel too much alike. At length, as we were leaving the ridge of the hill to return home, I felt I must bring out the subject which was so pressing, and I said, without preparation:—

‘Marietta, Mrs. Strangways tells me your aunt was at Biarritz, before she went to Spain. But it is not at all certain she is at Madrid. I wish we could hear something more definite.’

She turned to me with ill-concealed excitement, and said, ‘I am going to her; but I could not bear to tell you.’

I did not ask her whether she had heard more than I told her; I will never let her suppose that I wish to pry into anything which she may wish to keep to herself; but I answered gently, ‘And I am going with you.’

An exclamation, and an absolute rejection of the proposal, followed, then a long conversation, in which I came off, as I fully resolved I would, the conqueror. She was

vehement at first, almost angry; there was a mixture of independence and unselfishness, I suspect, in her feelings; and I could almost have smiled, as I saw the tears in her eyes, whilst she protested she was born to give trouble and pain to every one with whom she was connected; that she had been a constant anxiety to her uncle, and now she was a burden to me; it was so very unreasonable; but I knew that the feeling would pass off, and that the English elements of her character, common sense and good judgment, would at last make themselves heard. So I waited very patiently, only every now and then putting in a word in the form of a question—which is always the most convincing mode of argument, since it throws the *onus probandi* upon your opponent; and by degrees I brought her round to see that the idea of setting off to Spain by herself was absolutely impracticable, and that by accompanying her, which I could easily do if Ina were left with Mrs. Strangways, I might possibly do myself good, and certainly should shield her from harm. She was as enthusiastically grateful then, as she had been wilful before. She seized my hand and covered it with kisses—an Italian fashion which she has never lost, and which I do not desire she should—and we entered into all the plans for the journey with the coolness of two experienced couriers. I feel as I talk to her how young she is, and how surface-deep are the griefs which she has hitherto experienced, though they have been very real. She likes the thought of Spain, and says she does. I do not feel that I can like the thought of anything, except it may be to sit alone in my own room, and go through, again and again, the scenes of the last six weeks. I ponder by myself what the results of the Spanish journey will be. Will Marietta remain with her aunt? I marvel that she herself does not shrink from such a possibility. But this again is the effect of youth and the Southern

temperament. Marietta takes each day as it comes, and does not look beyond it. We sombre northerners might learn a very wise lesson from that habit of mind. I have written myself to Mrs. Davidson, begging her to give me all the definite information she can. Marietta wished to write; but I feel it necessary at once to assume the position of authority; for the poor child, with her independence and eagerness, will surely bring herself into difficulties, if I allow her to have the reins in her own hands. I would give a great deal to be saved this Spanish journey and allowed to go home; but I see no alternative, and I am collecting all the information I can about it. The railway is only partially opened to Madrid; but Bradshaw makes it all look very easy. The language will be a difficulty; but I can just read Spanish, and Mrs. Strangways says she will give me a few lessons in pronunciation. I suppose French will really help us sufficiently; but Marietta's Italian will, I fear, be rather the reverse of an assistance. The two languages are so alike in appearance, and so different in reality, that they are continually running into each other and causing confusion.

The possibility of separation for a few weeks has been suggested to Ina, and has been a blow to her, greater than I anticipated. She likes Mrs. Strangways so much that I had hoped she would be quite reconciled to the thought of remaining with her; but she is so entirely broken down by this grief, that she cannot interest herself in anything. She says that she would have liked to stay a little longer at Pau, if we could all have been together, for that she cannot bear to leave the cemetery, and she wants to wait and see the cross put up: but people here are so very slow in their work that I do not know when that will be.

Mrs. Strangways wants us to go up to Eaux-Chaudes and Eaux-Bonnes for a night, if the weather should improve; she thinks it may please Ina, and give her new

associations with the place. Perhaps it may be so, but I doubt; at any rate, there is no harm in trying, and it is the only opportunity she is likely to have now of seeing the mountains nearer, for as soon as I come back from Spain we must go home directly.

November 29.—A letter from Mrs. Davidson, begging me, if possible, to go to her at Biarritz. She says there are things which she could tell me in conversation, but which cannot so well be trusted to writing. Mrs. Randolph is in Spain somewhere; that is all she knows; but she will find out for certain in a few days. If we do go to Spain, she says we must start from Bayonne, only five miles from Biarritz, which is not, therefore, out of our way. This plan seems a delay, but I do not see how we are to avoid it.

I thought at first of finally leaving Pau on Tuesday, but we cannot possibly manage it; and besides we could not then go to Eaux-Bonnes with Ina. She seems rather to take to the idea of the little expedition now, and I am only too thankful to find anything which will rouse her. During this last week she has done little else but gaze into the fire with her eyes full of tears. I trust I am not wrong in leaving her, but perhaps the presence of strangers will be better for her than mine. She knows too well what I am thinking of. Marietta is very good and patient, and yet in her heart, as I often fancy, a little impatient. She stands at the window, and looks at the Pic du Midi, and says, with a sigh, '*Ah, povera zia!*—she is beyond the mountains:' and I am sure that she feels as though she ought to be a bird to fly over them; but she acquiesces in all our arrangements, and is most tender to Ina, never for a moment allowing her to think that she has any thought in her heart, but that of comforting her. I don't think Ina recognises the possibility of Marietta's remaining behind in Spain. I try not to do so myself. It

could not—must not be. I have arranged for Drayton to go home, and there is a prospect of sub-letting our rooms. These are great reliefs. My home letters give me all the comfort which love and sympathy can; but no one knows yet that the end has come, and the hopes which they still all express make one's heart very sad.

I went to the cemetery by myself on Sunday, between the morning and afternoon services, and then I could get the feeling of the place more into my mind. It is not as dreary as I had feared. The ground itself is part of the Roman Catholic cemetery, and this new piece has lately been taken in, so that it looks rather untidy now, but it will soon be put in order. The dear child rests close under a south wall. The sun was shining full upon it when I was there on Sunday, and the warmth of the day was like summer. A glimpse of some of the near wooded hills around Pau is to be had from the spot, but the far-off mountains can only be seen outside the cemetery. There is one view looking down a steep street to the trees around the Château, with the white peaks rising beyond, which I am almost tempted to have photographed. It gives the only true idea of my child's last resting-place on earth; and just now when the different ranges are marked by lines of glittering snow, it is indescribably beautiful. I have given orders for a flat stone (which is the custom of the country), with her name and the date, and a cross engraved below. I mean also to have an upright cross at the head, with the words, 'Thy will be done.' They were her own words that last night, and they express all one longs to feel, and all I hope that one does feel. The next grave to hers is that of a clergyman, who died three or four weeks ago. Mr. Benson spoke to me about him, and said how good he was. I don't know why I should feel comforted by the thought that I know something of the person who rests beside her; but I do.

CHAPTER VII.

Hôtel Baudot, Eaux-Chaudes: December 1.—A most delicious day, warm and bright: such a delightful contrast to the weather we have lately had! We left Pau between ten and eleven. Ina really looked cheered, and this cheered us all. We had a most lovely drive, with the snowy mountains, headed by the Pic du Midi, just in front; and a little river, clear and foaming, rushing by our side, spanned occasionally by rude bridges. Picturesque peasants stood at the doorways of their neat cottages, or carried on their work in the green meadows which sparkled in the sunshine, and blended their fresh hopeful colouring with the autumnal orange tints of the woods, and the grey and purple haze on the mountains. We waited for an hour and a half at Louvie to rest the tired horses, and walked on some way, allowing the carriage to overtake us. Ina, for the first time, talked with some interest about the Spanish journey, and wished she was going with us. Marietta said that she would not have insisted upon going if she had not thought it her duty. It was the feeling for her uncle which chiefly prompted her. She hoped I understood this. Yes, I did understand it; but I scarcely said so heartily enough to satisfy her; and I was obliged to assure her again and again that I was not merely yielding to her whim in accompanying her, but doing what I felt was best for us both. And certainly I am not yielding to a whim, for, with her strong feeling of duty, there is nothing else to be done, and

it would make me really miserable if she were to go alone ; but how I sometimes dread the journey, no words can say. The latter part of our drive was so steep, and the horses were so far from being up to their work, that it was late and quite dark when we reached Eaux-Chaudes, and we could only obtain a glimpse of some magnificent cliffs shutting in a deep ravine, down which rushed a noisy mountain torrent. We drove to the Hôtel de France, but it was shut up. At this season the place is quite deserted, and I was afraid we should, after all, find no accommodation ; but we were received at the Hôtel Baudot, and found the people civil, and the rooms as comfortable as rooms furnished for summer could be. A blazing fire and a good tea made us feel quite at home ; but we were all tired, and went to our rooms early. I am writing my journal just before I go to bed. The wind is rushing and howling round the house, and knocking for entrance at the windows. I doubt if it promises favourably for to-morrow, and I think of Spain and the Sierra Guadarrama, and the table-land of Madrid, and shudder. The chambermaid tells me that we are not the only people in the house. A German baron has been here for some days.

December 2 : Pau.—To my surprise and satisfaction, we have had a fine day, and certainly we have made the most of it ; but I thought at first we were to have had a disappointment, for when we asked for a carriage to take us up the valley to Gabas, at the foot of the Pic du Midi, we found that there was not such a thing to be had, and we were actually obliged to send for one to Eaux-Bonnes. This delayed us a good deal. As we were waiting about, Marietta came to me with rather a disagreeable piece of information. She had caught a glimpse of the German baron, and recognised in him Baron von Bronnen, Lady Chase's half-brother, who

stayed at Woodleigh, and brought Mrs. Randolph into such difficulties. She asked me what she should do if they met. Of course, I said, 'cut him;' but I was quite sure he would take care not to meet her if he had the least idea who she was. We sent for the visitors' book, but he had not written his name. Marietta, however, says she has not the slightest doubt that it is he. It did not strike her that there was anything peculiar in his being in this part of the world just when Mrs. Randolph has been in the neighbourhood, and I did not suggest the idea. I wonder where his wife is. Marietta asked me if it would be wrong to say anything about him to Ina, and I said 'no.' Ina is no longer a child, and mysteries only create mysteries. In dealing with a disposition like hers, a little prone to something not absolutely, transparently open, it is essentially important to have no more reserves than are necessary. And I have always found in life, even in the case of children, that if things can be put before them plainly, it is best that they should be. Curiosity and imagination are far more dangerous in their effects than any realities. Evil in a fancy dress is interesting; in plain clothes, hideous. Let Ina see that there is some mystery about this German baron which prevents Marietta from recognising him, and she will let her thoughts rest upon him—she can scarcely help doing so—with a certain amount of excitement. Say that he is a gambler and a cheat, and she will turn away with disgust.

The carriage came at last from Eaux-Bonnes. We settled that it should take us up the valley to Gabas, return here, and carry us on to Eaux-Bonnes, which Marietta rather wished to see. Our own carriage was to be sent over to meet us there, and take us back to Pau. I looked about for the baron before starting, but could see no trace of him, and I did not like to make any

enquiries about him. In fact, there was no excuse for doing so. The drive to Gabas took us up the Val d'Ossau, for the most part a continuation of the splendid rocky wooded ravine in which the hotels and houses of Eaux-Chaudes are built. The Pic du Midi came in sight as we drew near the end of the valley, but at the entrance its peculiarity is nearly lost; it looks only like part of a range of mountains. There was a torrent by the side of the road, as there always is in these mountain districts; the colour of this one was something unrivalled—a most exquisite emerald green—transparent, so that every pebble in its depths could be seen, except when the pure white foam dashed over the rocks embedded in the stream. It was the one glad living thing in the midst of what was otherwise solemn beauty; for there was deep snow on the road, and the lofty peak stood out in its stern and seemingly unapproachable grandeur, closing up the valley as if to warn us from attempting to invade its solitary dominions. The carriage took us as far as it could, and then the driver said he must rest his horses, and we all got out and walked on a little farther; but it was impossible to go far, the snow was too deep. Marietta and Ina were adventurous, and went on some way beyond me. There was something tempting to Ina in the knowledge that if she could only follow the mule track in this direction, she might go over into Spain to the baths of Panticosa. She and Marietta both have a most sunny idea of Spain. I can't say that I have. Whilst they were scrambling about, I walked up and down in the snow, in front of the little inn where our driver was taking his refreshment. So strange, awful, lonely, and sad it was! I could not realise to myself how I found myself there—what chain of events had brought me there, what connection there was between this and the former portions of my life. My

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darling in her quiet grave seemed an episode in existence. She seemed to have been lent me for so short a time, almost, I could have said, for no purpose, at least, connected with this world. And that thought carried me on to the great hidden purpose for which we all live—the purpose for which all these mighty works of nature, the giant mountains and rocks and precipices, were formed to be as they are. I was scarcely conscious of anything about me as I paced up and down in this dreamy abstraction of thought, when I was interrupted by a gentleman—I must, I suppose, call him so—who came out of the inn, looked me full in the face, then stopped, and apologised for interrupting me; but ‘as we were a party of ladies, perhaps he might be allowed to suggest that it would be as well if we were to return quickly. Our driver was not a very sober individual, and he and the landlord of the inn were likely to take more than was desirable if he were allowed to remain too long.’ I thanked him, not perhaps as heartily as I ought, for I recognised him directly as Baron von Bronnen. We passed each other in the corridor of the hotel last evening. He proposed to go and tell the driver to get the carriage ready, and I thanked him; and he went into the house, but returned almost immediately, and entered into conversation, all the while, as I could see, furtively looking up the road to watch if Marietta was coming. What he said was very ordinary and unimportant, except that he took especial pains to repeat several times that he was on his way to Switzerland; that he wished to compare the Alps and the Pyrenees, implying that he was very fond of science, and particularly interested in geology. I asked him if he had ever been in Spain. ‘No; he had often wished to go, and it was very tantalising to be so near and to be unable to do so. But at present it was impossible. Switzerland was his destination, and to Switzerland he

must go.' He did not wait to give the same information to Marietta, for as soon as he saw her drawing near, he made me a most elaborate bow, and walked away. What became of him I could not quite make out. He must have frightened the driver greatly; for the man came out apologising, quite humbly, for having kept us so long, though really I should not have been inclined myself to make any complaint of his dilatoriness. Marietta was amused at my *rencontre*, and we both congratulated ourselves that the baron's destination was Switzerland, or, as Marietta suggested with great probability, the German watering-places, with their gambling-tables. We had only time for a hasty luncheon when we got back to the Hôtel Baudot, and started again immediately for Eaux-Bonnes, which I can imagine is a pleasanter place to be in for the summer than Eaux-Chaudes, though it certainly is not so beautiful. The ravine is more open, and the cliffs are not so striking, but the Pic de Gers, just above the village, is very grand. I call the place a village, yet really it is only a collection of hotels and boarding-houses, shut up at this season, and, in consequence, looking very dismal. We left Eaux-Bonnes about half-past three, and were at Pau by seven. There was a kind of home feeling in being in our own apartments again, but there can be no real rest for me yet.

Pau : December 4.—Settled Ina with Mrs. Strangways, paid a last visit to the cemetery, and gave all directions for the cross and for the stone over the grave, which is essential here, if one wishes to preserve the spot undesecrated. I have arranged that it is to be mine *à perpétuité* by actually buying the ground. Without this, after a certain number of years—I forget how many, but really a very few—there would, I am told, be a right to make use of it for another grave. All this is very dreadful to us; but I never can understand the Southern view of death

and its attendant circumstances. Everything is so rapid, so irreverent—as if when the spirit had departed, the body had lost all sacredness. There may be splendid funeral trappings, and a grand service performed over the dead; but the beauty, the hallowed poetry of feeling associated with the green grave in an English churchyard is not to be found. Such at least has been the result of my own observation and experience.

We travel to-morrow, partly by diligence, partly by railway, and mean to sleep at Bayonne, and drive over to Biarritz the next day. Whether we shall go further, or return here, depends upon what we hear from Mrs. Davidson. I was tempted at first to cheer Ina by suggesting that we should very likely come back, and not attempt the Spanish journey, but in my heart I do not believe we shall return; and I am sure it is a mistake in any case to buoy a young person up with unfounded hopes. A few experiences of disappointment will then entirely check their confidence in one's words. So I always try to put things before them exactly as they are. And Ina is making up her mind to be brave, and to face the probability that she will not see us again for three or four weeks. I have told her also precisely what I feel about Marietta's remaining with her aunt. Being naturally hopeful, she does not dwell upon the possibilities which may make the stay absolutely unavoidable, and I am well contented to leave her without this additional anxiety. Drayton starts for England to-morrow with a cousin of Colonel Strangways, who promises to take charge of her. She longs to see the little ones; but a large piece of her heart is left here.

CHAPTER VIII.

Friday, December 5: Biarritz.—We started at nine from Pau. Dear Ina breakfasted with us, and kept up bravely till it came to just the last moment, and then I am afraid we all broke down; but I do hope and trust the separation will be very short. We had a dull day for our journey to Bayonne, and passed through an uninteresting country. Orthez we could see nothing of, and Dax, which seems rather a picturesque old town, is only associated in my mind with the railway station at which we had to wait three hours. In a few months they hope to have the railway completed to Pau. There was no private waiting-room, of course, and the officials were inclined at first to turn us out from the public room like the rest of the world, and make us provide for ourselves as we could; but we threw ourselves upon their mercy, and at last obtained permission to remain, and by the aid of a fire, books, and a sofa, we made ourselves very comfortable. If we had been really energetic travellers, we should have gone out to see something of the town; but we were both tired, and I suspect we should have had to walk a considerable way before we reached anything at all interesting.

These short days give one no opportunity of seeing the country: it was dark several hours before we reached Bayonne. In fact we did not arrive there till half-past nine at night. The Hôtel St. Etienne was rough and

primitive, and looked dirty, but proved clean. They gave us a tolerable supper, and we were thankful to go to bed. In the morning Marietta and I agreed that it would be as well to make some enquiries about our possible Spanish journey, and we went off to the consul, and gained from him all the necessary information as to money. He does not foresee any difficulty for us, as the railway to Madrid is open a good part of the way, and the intervals are traversed by Diligences in regular communication. He advises us to go straight through at once without stopping, but this I feel would be quite impossible. We should both be completely knocked up. Marietta herself, anxious though she is, owned that it would be more than she could bear. The omnibus to Biarritz goes several times a day, but we did not start till the afternoon, for we wanted to see something of Bayonne. It is more interesting and more Spanish-looking than Bordeaux. The narrow arcaded streets are picturesque; and there is an interest, too, in the traces of the near vicinity of Spain, the advertisements and names being so constantly Spanish as well as French. We went round the fortifications—triple lines of earthworks, forming a charming walk, and commanding a view of the Pyrenees and the two little rivers which join here. But the mountains had lost their grandeur, and I sighed for the Pic du Midi. The cathedral interested me from the singular absence of any figures of the Blessed Virgin, or any allusion to her worship, either in the ornaments of the church, or the archbishop's address to his people pasted on the doorway, otherwise there is no particular beauty in it. Its style is late Gothic, and there are some tolerable modern painted-glass windows. Bayonne seems to me a hundred years behind the civilised world, but my acquaintance with it is slight, and perhaps I do it injustice. Marietta was amused by it, and I feel that the

novelty and change must be of service to us both, in spite of all drawbacks.

The four o'clock omnibus brought us on here (to Biarritz) through a heathery moorland country betokening an approach to the sea. Immediately around Bayonne avenues of trees in their autumnal colours (for they are not yet quite bare) gave a richness to the view, and the old grey town looked quietly cheerful, and out of the noise and stir of the world, so that I thought it might be a pleasant place to live in. History, however, would tell a different tale of it. Biarritz was a kind of fishing village originally, now villas and hotels are interspersed amongst the poor cottages. The houses have a yellow tint, and the blinds are a bright green, and there is a certain ruggedness and disorder about every thing which is picturesquely French. The Hôtel d'Angleterre, which stands in a kind of square close to the sea, is very comfortable. We have two bedrooms and a little sitting-room made up for perpetual summer—no carpets, and white window curtains; but as we are sitting now without a fire, and don't feel the need of one, the summer tone does not signify.

As regards visitors, the place is almost deserted, the Davidsons being the only persons besides ourselves who are in this hotel, but they are likely to remain here; they find the climate so pleasant—mild, but not as relaxing as Pau. We have had very little satisfactory conversation as yet. They are pleasant but cautious people, and I must see Mrs. Davidson alone before I can get from her all she has to tell. To-night we were all together in the public *salle*, where we dined, and I could gain nothing but general facts. One thing of importance we have, however, learnt, that Mrs. Randolph really is at Madrid, or has been there till within the last few days. This so far settles our plans that we have a

definite point before us. If there had been any uncertainty, I should have unquestionably declined undertaking a journey into Spain at this season of the year with only Marietta. It is not a country in which two ladies can wander about alone searching for another lady; but Mr. Davidson tells me we may get to Madrid now without difficulty. Marietta is so infinitely relieved: it is quite touching. 'Ah, *carissima*!' she exclaimed, as she knelt down beside me in the *salle à manger*, quite regardless of the presence of strangers, 'you are my guardian angel, my mother. God is so good to me in giving you to me. And we will see my poor aunt; we will bring her away; we will persuade her to come back to England with us. She will be safe there.' Mrs. Davidson, the most quiet, reserved, undemonstrative of Englishwomen, looked on in surprise. Mr. Davidson was amused and interested. I quieted the poor child's excitement as well as I could without chilling her. But all this feeling for Mrs. Randolph—it is very strange! And the idea of bringing her back with us to England is something quite new. Besides even now I must hear what Mrs. Davidson has to tell me before I can positively make up my mind what to do. Baron von Bronnen and Lady Chase are not persons I can let Marietta mix herself up with if it can in any way be avoided. The baron, however, one may hope, is by this time on his way to Switzerland.

Saturday, December 6: Biarritz.—The first thing this morning was to have my talk with Mrs. Davidson. Marietta had a headache, and did not get up to breakfast. Mr. Davidson went out early, and Mrs. Davidson and I were left in possession of the *salle*. Then came the history I had been wishing for—a very uncomfortable one. It seems that Mrs. Randolph came to Biarritz some weeks ago by herself, or, at least, with only a maid.

She had known the Davidsons some years ago, and the acquaintance was renewed, and they were a good deal together, and on very friendly terms, until the appearance of a certain lady calling herself Mrs. Somebody, but who, from Mrs. Davidson's account, must have been Lady Chase. With her came Baron von Bronnen, whom, most strange to say, Mrs. Randolph received as a friend. He gave himself out as a widower, and the gossiping world settled it that he and Mrs. Randolph were to be married. The Davidsons soon saw what kind of persons these new friends were, and were extremely anxious to keep Mrs. Randolph from them, and did all they could to open her eyes. But it was the old story—the moth flying round the candle; and, at last, there was an open split between her and the Davidsons. Then Mrs. Randolph became extremely ill. She had come to Biarritz for health, her lungs being seriously affected. The doctors ordered her farther south, and she stated that she was going to Malaga. And about three weeks ago she and her maid left Biarritz, Lady Chase and the baron remaining behind for about a week, and then departing, no one knows where. At Valladolid, it seems poor Mrs. Randolph became much worse, and though she managed to get on to Madrid (the very worst place in Europe that she could have chosen), she has been detained there ever since. Mrs. Davidson's informant is a friend, who, with her daughter, happens to be in the same hotel at Madrid. She gives a very bad report of Mrs. Randolph, but says that she is bent upon going south, and will certainly leave Madrid the very first day she can. The climate is so bad: it is death to remain there.

A most grievous history. I feel we can do little or no good by following this unhappy woman, unless we could remain with her, which is an impossibility. Yet I cannot draw back. She is alone, and very ill, and possibly when

it is known that we are watching over her, those who are evidently bent upon making use of her for their own advantage, and for her misery, may for a time be kept aloof. I say *for her misery*, for Mrs. Davidson assures me there can be no doubt whatever that her money is the object of attraction; and that if this Baron, who has really lost his wife, can but persuade her to marry him, it will not signify how soon afterwards she dies.

I have one thought in my mind, which strengthens my decision as regards the journey, though I do not venture to suggest it to Marietta. In the event of Mrs. Randolph's death, I suspect there would be considerable difficulty in getting possession of Mr. Randolph's legacy. It would be too sad to let it all fall into the hands of Lady Chase and the Baron, and it infallibly would if cheating and lies could effect their purpose. I wrote to Marietta's lawyer from Pau, asking him what I could do in case we met with Mrs. Randolph, and he has given me what he says is the best advice in his power; but he adds that no one can really compel her to do what she ought—which is to sign a paper that he has drawn up, though of course legal measures may be taken if she should refuse. Still I mean to try. Marietta, in her youthful contempt of all pecuniary transactions, would think herself mean if she were to mix up any idea of personal advantage with this search after her aunt: but there is no doubt that a very great deal of her future comfort depends upon something being done to secure her rightful claim, and there is no one but myself who can take any steps in the matter; so I shall act, and say nothing to her, but allow her to feel that the journey is, on her part, simply one of disinterested affection and duty. I went to see her after my conversation with Mrs. Davidson, and told her the outline of what I had heard, omitting everything that was only conjecture; and when

I said that we would leave Biarritz on Monday, the tears rushed to her eyes, and all she could say was—‘ My poor uncle ! he would bless you, as I do.’ It was evidently a great weight off her mind, and she wanted to get up and help me in any preparations which might be necessary ; but her head was still bad, so I made her lie still, and went off to settle everything with Mr. Davidson, who was going into Bayonne, and undertook to bring us back our passports, about which I spoke to the Consul yesterday. He promised also to provide us with some Spanish money, and to secure our places in the Spanish Diligence. We shall not leave Bayonne till the middle of the day, and must travel all night—a most unpleasant arrangement, and one which will entirely prevent our seeing the most beautiful parts of the road,—but it cannot be helped.

When all this business was transacted, I went out for a quiet walk by myself. At this season of the year Biarritz is like a little seaside village, and one can do just as one likes. The square (in which are the hotels) is the chief thing to remind one that it is a fashionable watering-place ; in other parts the small houses are dotted about, mixed up with the original fishing-hamlet, in very primitive fashion. The Empress Eugénie’s square and ugly, but I have no doubt very comfortable, residence stands by itself, at about half a mile from the village, and close upon the shore. A hundred years hence there may be trees and flowers about it, but it will take nearly that time, I should think, to make them grow. Still the whole place is picturesque and pleasant. The country immediately around is open, broken, and heathery. The rocks on the shore are very fine, and the sea-view magnificent. I kept on the top of the cliffs this morning at first, so as to command the sea-view ; and at last found myself by an old tower, from which I could


look over the bay to the mountains of Spain. Then I descended, and wandered along the firm smooth sand—so enticing for a walk, that I went on and on till I found the sun too powerful, and was glad to seek something like shelter under a dark cliff. There I seated myself, turning away from Biarritz, and looking towards the hills of Spain—purple, jagged, stretching away to the province of Guipuzcoa; the mountain called ‘Tres Coronas’ standing out like a fortress in the background. The sea was calm in the distance, but long heavy waves were rolling in upon the beach, lulling one with their regular constant rush. The sound just suited the day—a delicious blending of the freshness of December with the satisfying yet not overpowering heat of summer.

I sat there with the full warmth of the sun upon me, and revelled in the rich colouring, the sharp outlines, and the dreamy mystery of those unknown hills, with the waves of the Bay of Biscay washing their base; and felt—what one so very rarely does feel—that the romance of existence was not dead, but only sleeping, buried for a while under care and sorrow, but ready to wake up again in vigour whenever the pressure may be removed. And that kind of mountain beauty always makes me think of the loveliness of another world. It is, like the glimpses which the Bible gives us of Heaven, distinct in general colouring, though vague in detail; and so my thoughts travelled on to the dear child who is always present to me now, and I was soothed with the fancy that even in her present state she might be enjoying a perception of beauty which here she never had the power of imagining, much less realising. I was sure, after that hour on the shore, that the change was doing me good; and though the keen heartache often comes back, it is not what it was that night at Eaux-Chaudes, when I felt so nervously miserable, that I began to consider seriously whether it would be

right to undertake the Spanish journey, and whether I ought not rather to get home as fast as I could.

In the afternoon, Mrs. Davidson took me for a walk to the Protestant burying-ground, really part of a Roman Catholic churchyard. There was a lovely view from it of the Spanish hills, and a low ridge of the snowy Pyrenees, far off on the horizon, and looking like petrified foam of the sea. Mrs. Davidson pointed out the grave of a Mrs. Penrhyn, and asked if she could be any relation of Ina's. I was surprised that she knew anything about the family, till I found that John Penrhyn had been here, and had talked about us. I am afraid, from what Mrs. Davidson said, that he also made acquaintance with Baron von Bronnen and Lady Chase—dangerous society for a young man!

Sunday, December 7: Biarritz.—Another deliciously warm day. The English full service, which is still kept up, was an immense comfort. The chapel was very plain—little more than a room; but nothing better can be expected abroad, and I was too thankful to criticise. We were surprised to find a very fair congregation. Marietta had lost her headache, and was able to go with me. After church we went to the cliffs, and really could scarcely make up our minds to leave them. The waves were wonderful—dashing against the huge, sharp, hollowed rocks, and tossing their foam to the height of forty or fifty feet; or rushing through natural arches, and when stopped by receding waves, leaping up frantically and exultingly; and again rolling back into the arches, to be sent forward again with a sound like booming cannon. And all the while the sea beyond was quite calm, the sky clear and blue, the sunlight sparkling on the water, and turning the leaping spray into soft rainbows. It was the most perfect sea I had ever looked upon, and certainly the most enjoyable. It cheered me, too, to watch



Marietta's delight in it. She was like a child in her ecstasy. It is one of her peculiarities—or rather, I suspect, it is part of her Italian nature—to be absolutely absorbed in the present, whatever that may be. We had luncheon and went to afternoon prayers (there was no sermon), and then returned again to the cliffs. The sea was even finer than before, the foam along the open bay tossing itself so as to hide the bases of the Spanish hills. We waited till the mountains became a deep purple, and one bright sunset light, deep red, spread and spread, and saturated the sky with brilliancy—long lines of crimson shading into pale-grey, and again melting into the palest, purest green. We had a quiet *table-d'hôte* dinner, only ourselves and the Davidsons, and went out afterwards to enjoy the moonlight in the Port des Pêcheurs. If I had a wish just now, I think it would be to send for Ina, stay here for a week, and then go back to England.

CHAPTER IX.

December 10: Burgos, Fonda de la Norte.—At last in Spain: but oh! we have had such a weary journey, and are so tired and ill! It has been our first experience of travelling by night in a Diligence, and we earnestly desire it may be our last. But I must give the details. We parted from the Davidsons and Biarritz yesterday about twelve o'clock, and went by the little omnibus to Bayonne. There the regular Spanish Diligence took us up, and at one o'clock we were on our road to Madrid, and fairly comfortable, for we had the *coupé* to ourselves. The road bordered the sea, and the hills were almost mountainous, the Tres Coronas being especially striking; so that there was a good deal to interest us in the scenery—to say nothing of the amusement of watching a boy on a donkey, who raced the Diligence into St. Jean de Luz. Then came the Bidassoa, and all its associations, to add to its beauty; for it is extremely pretty, wide, curving, and clear, with green wooded meadows forming its shelving banks; and crossing the bridge we were actually on Spanish ground, and the Spanish officials, wrapped in their grandee cloaks, came up and examined our passports. The luggage was left to be inspected at Irun, where they detained us for about half an hour. When we started again we found, to our dismay, that the third place in the *coupé* was to be occupied by a Spanish officer, who would smoke, and brought with him a most insufferable odour of garlic. What to do we could not imagine. Marietta put down the window, which made us very cold; but

anything was better than the fumes we had before, and we really desired to give our companion a hint that the smoke was disagreeable. We were not communicative, of course, for we had no language, except a very few words of Spanish; and I am afraid the poor man found his position anything but agreeable. It soon grew very dark, so that we lost all the beautiful scenery in approaching St. Sebastian; and when we drove into the old town, at seven o'clock, it was raining fast. The Diligence stopped in a kind of square, and we were turned out into the rain, to find our way as we could to the *fonda*, or hotel, happily not far off. Rough, and unfurnished, and odorous with any but sweet odours, was the large *salle*, in which all the travellers were expected to make the best use of a very short time, and partake of supper, soup, and bouilli, and all the usual provisions for such an occasion—tolerably well cooked, though rather greasy. Marietta and I were resolved to make the best of everything, and partake of a decent meal whenever we could get it, upon the chance of not finding any when we wished for it; but I was already tired and headachy, and not much inclined to eat; so my meal was soon over, and I was able to draw my chair apart, and watch the strange new scene, and wonder how I came there. There were no distinctions of class: rough loud-talking men were eating voraciously, and almost equally rough-looking girls waiting upon them. I observed no particular difference of costume, only a general uncouthness and primitiveness; but a Diligence *table d'hôte* is never, I suppose, very refined. Everyone was very civil to us. There were one or two Frenchwomen, who had been travelling in the interior of the Diligence; but we were the only English. We made our first attempt at Spanish in asking for what we wanted, and were tolerably successful in making ourselves understood.

When we went out again into the darkness, it was raining fast; and we could not tell where to find the Diligence, and there was no one to help us; but we made our way to it at last, and were delighted to see no trace of our Spanish officer. We had understood that he was going on to Madrid, but I suspect our open window had frightened him from the *coupé*, and he had taken refuge in the interior of the vehicle. A most rejoicing circumstance that was for us. Marietta ensconced herself in one corner—I made myself comfortable in the other; and, with a very fervent hope that we might be left without any more intruders, we prepared, if possible, to go to sleep.

Being on Spanish ground, we had a team of mules to the Diligence, eleven at least, conducted by a man wrapped in a great cloak, with a hood like a monk's cowl drawn over his head. He rode on one of the foremost mules, and allowed the others, who apparently had very little guidance except their own 'sweet will,' to follow pretty much as they chose. The lights attached to the Diligence threw a ghastly glare just in front, making the darkness beyond still more dark; and every five minutes the muleteer uttered a kind of wild yell, which was I believe an encouraging or threatening admonition to his mules. When the road became steep, he dismounted and walked, and then the cries became more frequent. So we went on all through the night. I had a perception of ascending hills slowly, and descending them quickly; but the only fixed impression left on my mind is that of waking up continually from an uneasy sleep, and always hearing the same cry, seeing the same glare of unnatural orange-yellow light around me, and the dim forms of straggling mules, headed by an awful figure, wearing a monk's cowl, who seemed to be upon the point of leading us all into a deep archway beyond which was impenetrable night.

It is provoking to have lost a country in this way, and

all the more because I suspect there was a good deal of beautiful scenery in that earlier part of our journey, whilst the latter part was indescribably dreary. We stopped at six o'clock, in the morning,—dark still,—except for a pale moonlight, veiled by a cloudy sky. There was no town, no village or hamlet, to be seen—nothing but hills, not high, but sharp and rugged, and brought into distinctness by the moon gleaming on the snow. Around us was apparently a barren waste. A long low building, looking like a stable, was visible at some little distance. The mules were taken out of the Diligence; every one except ourselves dismounted, and we were left alone.

I supposed we were to change mules again, and, feeling hungry, I had recourse to our luncheon-basket. (I forgot to say that at Biarritz we had provided ourselves with cold chicken and a lavish supply of cracknels, which I stumbled upon accidentally just before we started.)

Presently a man came up to the Diligence, opened the door, and asked if we would not get out. 'No,' I said decidedly, and went on eating. Soon after came another with the same question. 'No,' I still said. Then followed a third, seeming much surprised at our position; and at last Marietta and I looked at each other, and thought we had blundered. We made out the word *fonda* from this new man, and he pointed to the low building towards which we had seen the mules making their way; and we discovered that we were expected to follow in the same direction—that the building was a *fonda*, and we were to breakfast there.

Such a place—and such a breakfast! A wooden shed, dirty floor, dirty tables, strewn with the remains of half-eaten repasts; cups, plates, and dishes in wild confusion; an unwashed waiter rushing about to clear a little space for us, bringing us each a tiny cup filled with a thick brown liquid, in which a spoon could almost stand upright, and

then taking up some sugared sponge-cake in his black fingers, and offering it to us! I tried the liquid. I had always had an ideal of Spanish chocolate, and therefore had ordered it; but it was nothing but muddy cinnamon, and I put it down as absolutely undrinkable. Happily, I did not want it, but it was nauseous to me beyond expression; and I was beginning to feel so ill and tired, that it quite upset me. Marietta took to it more kindly, and was far less tired, and I think rather amused to find herself in such a strange place. We were directed from the *fonda* to the railway-station of Olazo Goitia. It was another shed equally dirty, and more empty—not even a bench to sit upon, and not the slightest appearance of a fire, though it was bitterly cold. A man did, however, after a time, bring in a seat, and set fire to some sticks, and we managed to get a little warmth into us. But we had to wait two hours before the train started. The luxury of the railway-carriage cannot be described! It was like a comfortable house, and at first we had it to ourselves. But at Vitoria a Spanish party with an English friend joined us. If I had not been so desperately sleepy, and feeling so unwell, I might have been amused with talking to them; for they were pleasant refined people, and very courteous. As it was, I said but little. Vitoria is a large, bright, handsome-looking town; but the country around, at this season of the year, is intensely bare, and must always be stern and rocky, and only in parts grand, from the height of the cliffs. In fact, it was nothing but dreariness all the way to Burgos—partly I dare say from my own feelings, partly from the fact that it is winter and this is a corn country, and of course there are no signs of vegetation; but partly also, I suspect, from a natural inherent absence of all which really constitutes cheerful scenery. The rocks are red and bare, and the soil is the same; and there are no villages, no trees—nothing to make a variety! And then

the cold ! If it should be worse at Madrid, what will it be like ? We were at the Burgos railway-station by two o'clock. Unfortunately, at Pau we could not get the new edition of 'Murray,' and so chose a French guide-book instead—a great misfortune, from which we are likely to suffer much. Anyhow, we did not know where to go, and in our anxiety all our Spanish forsook us ; and we were obliged at last to trust ourselves to the guidance of a little native Flibbertigibbet, who professed to speak French, and indeed did speak it. He released us from a crowd of dirty men, who pressed about us till we were in despair ; but I had a misgiving that he was himself only a decoy, and would lead us astray. He brought us to the Fonda de la Norte, assuring us that it was the best in Burgos ; and if it is so, I can only say, ' May it never be my fate to visit the best hotel in Burgos again ! ' But Spanish hotels, like Spanish towns, are not to be judged by a comparison with those of France ; and Burgos looks like what it is, a city in its dotage—the houses in decay, and the life which still lingers in it, uncertain and weak. We had no escape from our guide, and so were obliged to accept his introduction to the brick-floored passages and dark low rooms of the Fonda de la Norte. Happily, they gave us a *salon* looking out into a narrow street, as well as a bedroom with two beds ; and we ordered a fire, and found out that there was a *table d'hôte* ; and then, though it was getting dark, and we were extremely tired, we both agreed that it would be impossible to resist a visit to the cathedral, which was close to us. As for seeing it, that was impossible. We only had an idea of something wonderfully perfect in size, and delicate in carving, and impressive as a whole ; but we reserved a closer inspection for the morning, and went back to a Spanish dinner in a dingy room with third-rate Spaniards, and no vestige of a lady. Almost I began to repent the

journey; yet the people are very civil, and the waiter was really distressed when he found I could not eat. We went to bed early, shivering with the cold, and our bedroom had the smallest possible allowance of furniture and no fireplace; and as I lay awake, really feeling extremely unwell, if not absolutely ill, I had time for dismal forebodings. Marietta, I hope, did not know how entirely oppressed I felt. She has been quite unhappy enough all day at seeing me so tired, and yet, now and then, the thought of two 'unprotected females' adventuring into this strange land strikes her with a sense of the ludicrous—and she laughs, and then I laugh. We are both better this morning, and have really lionised Burgos; walked about the bustling marketplace, with its very inferior shops and whitewashed arcades; visited the Town Hall, and done homage to the bones of the Cid and his wife Ximena, which are kept in a large chest, and might of course be any other persons' bones; and last, though not least, renewed our acquaintance with the cathedral. It was there, in fact, that our morning was chiefly spent. I must leave 'Murray' to describe it, and can only note the general impression. Externally, one chiefly remarks the elaborate delicacy of the open-worked spires and the highly-finished portals. Internally, it gives a greater impression of size and richness than any French cathedral I have seen; and the woodwork of the *retablo*, or reredos, for which Spain is celebrated, is something wonderful. Many of the figures are the size of life, but the general effect of the building is destroyed by the way in which what is called the *coro*, or central choir, is screened from the rest of the building. This *coro* is not at the extremity of a long nave, but meets one almost at the front entrance. The screen (or *reja*) is rich beyond description, but still it is a screen, and one does not care for the delicate workmanship of details; what one wants

is the effect of the 'long-drawn aisle and fretted vault,' and this is lost. I have never seen anything more beautiful than some of the side-chapels, that of one of the Great Constables of Castile especially: it was as large as an ordinary church, and filled with magnificent sculpture, wreathed pillars, carved canopies, and heraldic decorations—all the work of Italian artists. It certainly does not harmonise with the impression one has of Spain and its chivalrous barbarism. Massive richness is the idea I have brought away with me from the cathedral of Burgos. I was quite startled to see an enormous block of polished jasper displayed as one of the treasures of the Constable's Chapel. There is no lightness or sunshine about the building. The colouring is dark, the architecture noble but ponderous. In fact, the building struck me as being what one imagines the Spanish character to be—sterling and grand in its original elements, and capable of being highly civilised and ornamented; but the ornamentation seems an adjunct to the original design, not an essential part of it. We start for Valladolid at three o'clock. I am really not equal to going farther. Strictly speaking, and if we were sightseers, we ought to remain here till to-morrow, and drive to the Carthusian convent of Miraflores, and if possible visit the Tomb of the Cid, at some distance beyond. The Carthusian convent is finer, so it is said, than anything in Spain; but at this time of the year, and with a pressing motive for continuing our journey, it is impossible to think of it. If it had been summer, and we had both been equal to the exertion, we might have gone quite early in the morning; but winter and illness oblige one to give up a great deal. I confess to having such very uncomfortable associations with Burgos and the Fonda de la Norte that I am only anxious to get away from the place, and at the present moment I feel but little regret at leaving Miraflores unvisited.

CHAPTER X.

Valladolid, Fonda del Siglo: December 11.—Only time to note that it is very cold, that the sky is dull and grey, and that we have not seen the sun since we entered Spain: also that we are told this is the usual winter aspect. We were travelling from three till seven o'clock, the country more dreary than ever; no hills, only rocky barren plains, and squalid villages. Two Spanish gentlemen in our railway-carriage were very civil: one spoke French, so we got on very well; and I was feeling better, and altogether more up to my work. Also I was so glad to have escaped from Burgos, and Marietta rejoiced in being nearer Madrid. This is a much brighter, pleasanter place than Burgos. I can quite fancy it an ancient capital. The hotel is paradise compared with the Fonda de la Norte. We have actually two good-sized rooms, comfortably though rather quaintly furnished, with windows opening on a balcony, and old-fashioned beds, with clean white curtains, making me think of England. They gave us, on our arrival last night, a comfortable tea *à l'Anglaise*, except that the butter was not very eatable; but we are told that we must not expect butter in Spain. The only thing which really disturbed us was the liquid which was brought us when we asked for a little brandy to put in our travelling-flask. It was perfectly white, what they call *aguardiente*, and the odour was something unbearable. If I were to come to Spain again, I would lay in a stock of good brandy, for it is an absolute neces-

sity in some cases when travelling, and we have none now.

I am just writing up my journal, before we start by the night-train for Madrid. The morning has been devoted to lionising, for there is a good deal to see in this old town. We breakfasted at eleven at the *table d'hôte* or (as the Spaniards call it) the *mesa redonda*. The company (all Spanish) were of a higher class than those at Burgos; several of them spoke English. I suspect the Spaniards have a greater affinity, in taste and feeling, with the English than with the French. They no more forget the French invasion, and the aid they received from the English, than the Americans do the War of Independence, and the help of the French in the establishment of their Government. The breakfast was French in most respects—*café* and *côtelettes* for those who did not choose to have chocolate, with regard to which I am a coward since my experience at the railway-station of Olazo Goitia. The cathedral, the museum, and some churches occupied us all the morning. The Spanish Gothic architecture is much more elaborate and highly finished than either the French or English. The façade of San Gregorio is wonderful. There seems to be a mixture in it of the Moorish delicacy of workmanship; and the wreathed spiral columns of the Cloister are perfectly exquisite. One does so regret that photographs are not to be had here. Valladolid is dull as to the bustle of the streets, for there is nothing going on except in the Plaza Mayor; but it is white and clean, and the squares are broad and open. The great glory of the place is the wood sculpture, one cannot call it carving, of individuals whom I honestly confess I never heard of before—Juni and Hernandez. There is one room in the museum given up to it, and anything more startling and awful in the way of works of art I never saw. The figures are as large as life and painted; and one might fancy they would

be grotesque, but they are not. The subjects are almost all sacred, and their truthfulness is such that one can scarcely bear to look at those representing the sufferings of our Blessed Lord. This kind of wooden sculpture is, I fancy, peculiar to Spain. There were specimens of it in the *retablo* of Burgos Cathedral. Colleges are numerous here; I believe they are chiefly in the hands of the Jesuits. Of course we ladies could see nothing of them except the outside, with a glimpse into the *patios* or courtyards. Our commissionnaire expressed his disapprobation of religious orders in general, and seemed to rejoice that the town was freer from monks than it used to be. Perhaps, though, he said it only because he thought he should flatter our supposed Protestant prejudices.

We dine in about an hour's time, and set off at seven o'clock for Madrid.

CHAPTER XI.

Madrid, December 12: Fonda Peninsulares.—Such an experience! Almost such adventures! But we have been helped through them all. A Spanish party started from Valladolid with us at seven o'clock in the evening. We had made acquaintance at the *Mesa Redonda*, and they were extremely good-natured, and very courteous and refined in manner. We all agreed to get into the same railway carriage—three ladies and three gentlemen—and managed so to establish ourselves as to go to sleep very comfortably. Most foolishly, I insisted upon having a little window open close to me; I thought it necessary, and so it was in one respect; but the night was bitterly cold, and I suspect I shall suffer for my imprudence. We went on till about eleven o'clock, then the train came to a final stand-still under a rough covered station, with rows of sheds on each side; the centre occupied by about eleven Diligences, preparing to set off for Madrid, each with a team of ten or eleven mules. The said mules were brought up by their respective muleteers, with the usual accompaniment of cries and exhortations; amongst them rushed from Diligence to Diligence the passengers, turned out from the railway carriages, with the exception of the few who found their way to the dirty Fonda, where there was the ordinary array of unwashed waiters and half-emptied cups and saucers. The darkness of the night, only broken by the glare of the station lights, the cries of the muleteers, the trampling of the mules, the vociferations of the travellers, and the rush of rough

peasants and railway officials, with here and there a lady or gentleman, French or Spanish, as the case might be, were perfectly bewildering. Where to go or what to do we could not tell. We had lost our Spanish friends in the *mêlée*, and the little stock of the language at our disposal all but completely forsook us: and then—which was our Diligence? We had through-tickets to Madrid, and had been told that we were to be taken up by a certain *Diligencia de la Norte y Mediodia*. But no one acknowledged such a name. We showed our tickets—begged for help—every man we spoke to shook his head, and knew nothing. And there were the Diligences driving off, one after another, till it was evident we should soon be left to solitude and the Villalba railway station! We went to the Fonda in despair: we were half famished, and very cold, and a little frightened. Two gentlemen were sitting at a table with their backs to us. A Spanish courier was talking to them. They looked like Englishmen, and my hope revived. I thought I might venture to speak to them, but before I could quite make up my mind to this, one of them turned round, and, to my unutterable relief, I saw Mr. Neville. His companion was Henry Anson. What I said I really don't know. Marietta almost screamed with delight. There is no need to say how cordial and affectionate we all were, or how entirely the two gentlemen entered into our situation and offered to aid us in our perplexities. But there was an obstacle. They also had a ticket of *correspondencia*; they also could only travel by a certain Diligence, which, alas! was not ours. The courier was sent off to enquire for the *Norte y Mediodia*, and came back baffled, saying, that he could not find it, and that the two gentlemen must hasten to their own vehicle, which was just going; and adding, for our consolation, that we should do well to look after ourselves, for these Spanish Diligence *conducteurs*

would just as soon leave us behind as take us on. Mr. Neville hesitated what to do. He could scarcely have helped us by remaining behind, but I am sure he would have done so if it had not happened that just at that moment, as we were standing together in front of the Fonda, our Spanish railway companions came up, quite easy, quite cool, and calm, and satisfied. 'We were not to distress ourselves. They were in the same condition as ourselves. It was quite true there was no Diligence ready for us, but there would be one in a few minutes. We need not make ourselves in the least uncomfortable.' With this assurance Mr. Neville and Henry Anson thought they might be satisfied. Their courier hurried them away, and we said good-bye, and were told just as they were leaving us that they meant to be at the Fonda Peninsulares, and that we must let them know where we were. Then the last Diligence drove off; and I confess that, in spite of the assurance of our friends, I did not feel quite comfortable. However, in a few minutes another lumbering vehicle appeared. Marietta and I mounted into the *coupé*, by the side of a stout Spanish gentleman. Our friends ensconced themselves in the interior, and off we set. It was a repetition of the St. Sebastian night, except that the eleven Diligences made it a point of honour to race; and on we went through the night, always at the same speed, till we came to the Sierra Guadarrama, which, naturally enough, we ascended more leisurely. Once at the summit, we descended at an alarming pace. There was a moon, but the light showed nothing except the bank at the side of the road. I tried to sleep; but the back of the *coupé* was made to open and shut, so as to admit of a communication with the interior; and it so happened that the fastening was broken; and thus, instead of having a steady resting-place for my head, I swayed backwards and forwards, and nodded, and

woke, and tried to sleep again, and again woke, and was cheered by catching a few words of a conversation between Marietta and our Spanish friend, as to the extreme probability that we should be upset.

But we were not upset. We arrived safely at our place of destination, a broad plain, surrounded by mountains, bare, craggy, and covered with snow, which glittered in the moonlight. The door of the Diligence was opened, and we were invited to descend. I saw no building, and the wind was piercing. Unprepared for any such sudden termination and only just wakened from sleep, I lost my gloves and my Shetland veil—the latter an irremediable misfortune. They must, I was sure, be in the Diligence. The *conducteur* coolly lighted a little candle, and began to search the *coupé*. Marietta stood by like a martyr. I felt very guilty, and the wind—oh! how fiercely keen it was! Presently I put my hand into my pocket, and there was my veil! That Marietta kept her temper and did not reproach me, I consider the highest act of self-control which I ever witnessed. We began to look up in the world after this. There really was a railway station, with a refreshment-room close at hand, though I had not seen it. Marietta, with the most angelic Christian charity, forgot my misdeeds, and brought me a cup of coffee, and I sat down and amused myself with watching a little Spanish child about six years of age, dressed most fashionably, who was seated at a table with a piece of sweet cake in her hand, which she dipped into the thick chocolate, and then ate with the greatest *goût*. I envied her her taste, for I felt that chocolate was one's best resource in this part of the world. At six o'clock we were again in the railway carriage on our way to Madrid. Marietta was greatly excited. The fatigue and annoyance of the journey had made us almost forget its object. But now we were both able to think.

Marietta's mind, I could see, dwelt upon the probable condition in which we should find Mrs. Randolph; it was a mixed feeling of anxiety and interest. Like almost all young people, she enjoyed, in spite of herself, the sense of novelty. For myself, I confess I was far from comfortable, but as I could foresee nothing, it was useless to speculate upon what I might or might not be forced to do. My thoughts rather turned to our meeting with Mr. Neville and Henry Anson, which had at first given me unalloyed pleasure, but which upon consideration I foresaw might involve awkwardness.

The last thing I desired was to throw young Anson and Marietta together, but under such peculiar circumstances how could it be avoided? One thing I was glad of; we were likely to be at different hotels. Mrs. Randolph we had been told was at the Embajadores, and we intended to go there, if possible. Marietta had been anxious that I should write beforehand and engage rooms, but this I would not do, for I felt it to be possible that Mrs. Randolph's friends might be just those whom I might not choose to associate with, and therefore I wished to leave myself free; but we agreed that our first inquiries should be made at the Embajadores. Beyond this I really could do nothing to keep Henry Anson and Marietta apart. Events must go as they might. And having thus settled matters with my conscience, I forced myself to turn away from all doubtful worrying subjects, and looked out of the window. We were passing through a bare, dreary, savage country—all stone and brushwood. Hills there were in the distance, and as there was snow upon them, they really had a claim to the title of mountains; but the high table-land which surrounds Madrid, takes away so much from the apparent altitude of the Guadarrama range that all grandeur is lost. And yet the scene was striking, and in one respect most beautiful. On the other side of the Guadarrama we had

seen nothing but cold grey skies, colder and greyer even than in an English autumn. Now the heavens were cloudless, there was neither mist nor vapour; but as the morning dawned, the sky became one pure sheet of liquid gold, gradually melting into deep blue, whilst below stretched the vast sloping yellow plain, broken by rocks, and shaded by the dark spreading brushwood. As a specimen of colour it was to me quite unrivalled, and it has left an impression of an effect which I feel will remain by me when really beautiful scenes have been forgotten. There were a few trees and gardens as we drew near Madrid; but the city stands in a desert, and except for this peculiarity, there is nothing to make the approach to it striking.

We were thoroughly tired by the time we were deposited at the Madrid station, but excitement kept us both up. A Diligence was waiting to take passengers into the town, and we went up to it to secure our places. But we were not to depart so easily. This Diligence was also in *correspondencia*; that is to say, it could only move according to law, and this law had determined that our luggage should be left behind, and that we had no right to a place in the Diligence till it arrived. When we asked the why and wherefore of this strange proceeding, we were told that the luggage from the most distant parts had the precedence. Bayonne travellers were the first comers, they had been first served. We, having started only from Valladolid, were provided for afterwards; and as all the luggage could not be conveyed by this particular train, ours was not to arrive till eleven o'clock. In the meantime we were expected to wait at the station.

I think I should have succumbed to this regulation, however inconvenient, but for Marietta. Urged by her, I expostulated as well as I could both with the officials and the *conducteur* of the Diligence, and at last we softened

their flinty hearts. Our luggage, we were told, should be sent after us to the Diligence office, and we ourselves should have places in the interior, and be taken into the town. Then all our trouble seemed over. We drove through back streets, such as one always sees in the neighbourhood of a railway station, and which had nothing very peculiar to distinguish them except a certain amount of bustle and brightness, reminding one of Paris; and were finally deposited at the Embajadores, a large handsome-looking hotel on the outside—not quite as good in the inside.

‘Were there any English ladies there?’ was our first enquiry.

‘None.’

‘Had there been any in the hotel lately?’

‘Yes; two or three.’

‘Where were they now?’

‘It was not known.’

‘Were any of them ill?’

‘Yes; one was very ill.’

‘But where was she gone? Surely they must know. Where were the letters directed?’

The man of whom I asked this question rushed off, and brought back the master of the hotel, a courteous respectable individual, who, to my great satisfaction, spoke French.

‘An invalid English lady?’ Yes; he knew her. She had been at his house; but she and her maid had left for Valencia three days ago. The climate of Madrid was considered too keen. She had been ordered south. She appeared to be very ill. She was to be at the Fonda del Cid. Marietta looked at me in dismay. I think, poor child, she began to feel that she had been too impatient and urgent in insisting upon this wild search. I would not let her see how vexed I felt, and, without any further remark, I asked if they had apartments for us.

‘ Yes, certainly.’

And we were carried up a broad, not very clean, staircase, and through various passages, and ushered into a small low square room, rather scantily furnished, and with no fire-place. Another room containing two beds opened out of it.

‘ Was this all they had to offer us ?’

‘ Yes ; all. The hotel was quite full. But we should do very well ; we should have the advantage of the morning sun.’

This in Madrid ! A city with one of the coldest winter climates in Europe, built on a table-land more than two thousand feet above the level of the sea ! We declined the tempting offer, and drove off to the Principes. That also was full. Only the Peninsulares was left, at least of those hotels which had been specially recommended, and most unwillingly I told the Commissionnaire who went with us (for we had left the Diligence at the office, and were walking in search of a resting-place) to take us there. He mentioned the Inglaterra, but this I had been warned against as excessively expensive and only frequented by ambassadors and grandees.

We turned into the Calle de Alcalá, a broad handsome street, with trees on each side, and terminated by a stone gateway leading into the Prado. The Peninsulares is a large hotel near the top. It appeared to be everything it should be on the outside, but within there was the same dirty rambling look as at the Embajadores. It must have been originally, I fancy, a nobleman’s house. Now the entrance combines the palace and the stable. However, we did find rooms, though only in the *entresol*. They are low and dark, but we are not obliged to live in our bedrooms, which is a great gain. We have a little *salon*, with a large fire-place in one corner, within this is a bedroom, having two beds in deep recesses.

The one great annoyance is, that there is not a woman-servant in the hotel. The waiter, who speaks French, is, however, very civil. On our arrival we ordered breakfast, (tea and cutlets as usual), sent for the *blanchisseuse*, unpacked the few things we needed, and, in short, set to work to make ourselves at home. And on the whole we have succeeded fairly well; though the walls are very dingy, and the furniture is dark, shabby, and scanty, and without the quaintness which amused us at Valladolid. But Spain is a hundred years behind France, and Madrid, I should think, two hundred behind Paris, in real comfort. We both lay down on our beds and went to sleep after breakfast, for we were thoroughly tired out. Since then we have taken a Commissionaire, and found our way to the post-office; but there were no letters—a great disappointment, though I don't know that we had much right to expect any, at least from England; we have been so uncertain in our movements; and I begged Mrs. Bradshaw to write to Ina, rather than to me, because she would be more sure of getting the letters. Now that I have seen the postal arrangements here, I can well understand how easy it is to miss letters. The names of the persons to whom the Poste Restante letters are addressed are written on a sheet of paper hung up against the wall; a certain number is attached to each name. You go and look at this paper, and then, if you see that there are letters for you, you demand them, first showing your passport and telling your number. A man sits behind a screen, sorting letters into different pigeon-holes, all numbered. He just glances at you, and gives you the letters which happen to be in your hole: but the chances are that there are others which have been mislaid, or have never been marked down on the paper; and in the latter case of course you are certain to lose them, because you would not think of enquiring for them. So also in reading


foreign names there must be a great risk of mistake ; and your letters may as likely as not be distributed under the wrong number. Marietta and I came away not at all convinced that we were really *letter-less*. After the post-office search we just crossed the Puerta del Sol, and walked to the end of the Calle de Alcalá, and then came back to the hotel. This first impression of Madrid is singularly bright. The famous Puerta del Sol, the centre of the city in every respect, is an open 'Plaza' into which all the principal streets converge, so that the whole bustle and fashion of the place must pass into it, and through it. What struck me to-day was the finished look of the houses, compared with southern continental cities generally, the handsome dress of the ladies, and the good *turn-outs* in the way of carriages and mules—the latter really very fine animals when properly cared for, as they are here. Marietta and I found no difficulty in going about. People stared at us a little, but not more than was to be expected. Bonnets are becoming common here, unfortunately, but the black lace mantilla is still frequently to be seen. Very picturesque it is, but it can give but little protection to the head.

No doubt it is good to have one's mind diverted from sad thoughts ; but I long for rest and quiet, and see no prospect of either. We must write to Valencia, and I suppose go there. After having come so far it would be foolish to turn back ; but it is a greater undertaking than I anticipated. We have as yet seen nothing of Mr. Neville and Henry Anson, but I suppose we shall meet at the five o'clock *table d'hôte*.

CHAPTER XII.

Tuesday, December 16.—Madrid still. I meant to have kept a regular journal, but it has been impossible; and as for description, the guide-book does all that. I can but note events, and they are not unimportant. Marietta wrote on Saturday to Valencia. The answer came this morning from Mrs. Randolph's maid, her mistress being too ill to write herself. Mrs. Randolph longed to see Marietta, but there were reasons why she wished her not to go to her for a few days. The maid would write again shortly. They were about to move to the Fonda de Paris. Mrs. Randolph's condition was very precarious, and all excitement must be avoided. This was the upshot of the letter. And most awkward it is, but we must wait till we hear further. In the meantime I shall take counsel with Mr. Neville, for he is most singularly mixed up with these matters. We met on the day of our arrival, at the *table d'hôte*, as I expected. It was a mutual pleasure, and I was very thankful, and tried to forget what the Dernham gossips might say. Really I do not know what we should have done without a gentleman belonging to us, for we were the only ladies at table, and the style of the men (I can't possibly call them gentlemen) who were present was quite odious, worse than common or vulgar. They were evidently not travellers, but business men of some kind: French, Spanish, and English; the three languages were used indiscriminately, but a few words which caught my ear so disgusted me, that I was rejoiced when they adopted

Spanish, because then I found it difficult to understand what they said. They took no notice of us, happily, and Mr. Neville, Mr. Anson, and ourselves formed a comfortable little party together. I really tried to engage Mr. Anson in conversation, and I think Mr. Neville was grateful to me; but he himself was abstracted, and did not manage to say much to Marietta; and at last, without any intention, we fell into the wrong order. Young Anson caught Marietta's attention, and it was very soon evident that the old attraction was resuming all its power. Towards the close of the dinner I really could not help talking to Mr. Neville, he had so much to talk about which interested me. It came out by degrees. He is in search of John Penrhyn, or rather he is following him in the hope of carrying him back to England; why, I was not directly told, but Mr. Neville hinted at dangerous companionship, and a young man's wilfulness, till, putting two and two together, and remembering what I had heard at Biarritz, of John Penrhyn's having been there in company, or at least associated with, Baron von Bronnen, I felt I could solve the riddle; and I spoke out openly, and told Mr. Neville of the little that I knew, and we became very sympathetic and mutually interested. It seems that Mr. Neville and Henry Anson were actually on their way to England, when a letter from the old uncle, who is the guardian of the family, made Mr. Neville feel that it was all-important to get hold of John Penrhyn immediately, and for this purpose he turned southwards, and is now on his way to Cordova and Seville, having learnt that this is the direction in which young Penrhyn has gone. After finding him, he purposes going to Cadiz and Gibraltar, and returning to England by the Peninsular and Oriental steamer. I asked if Henry Anson was to accompany him. The answer was doubtful. 'It would depend upon circumstances.' We



talked of John Penrhyn, and I said that I was greatly interested in him. Mr. Neville agreed that he was extremely attractive, and very clever. This was what they used to say of his father, and I wanted to hear more substantial praise, but I did not get what I wished. Very high principle—high, that is, as to the standard of right,—but too impulsive, too hasty, wanting in discretion: this is Mr. Neville's report. He himself, I should think, was never wanting in discretion, so perhaps he is a severe judge. But I can see he is uneasy about his young cousin.

After that first day, it was impossible to avoid really making one party. We were all seeing the same things, going to the same places, and if we had tried to avoid each other (I really did make several most conscientious efforts) we could not have succeeded. We were at the Museo on Saturday, and have been there again to-day, revelling in the pictures; Mr. Neville is extremely artistic, and at first he made Henry Anson jealous by carrying off Marietta to admire his favourites, and then discussing them with her. They stood together for nearly a quarter of an hour looking at the famous Velasquez, *Las Meninas*, in the Salon de Isabel. A fascinating picture it is. Velasquez is in the background, painting Philip III. and his wife; in the centre of the room stands a little princess, by no means beautiful, but the very embodiment of the consciousness of infantine royalty, her young lady attendants gathering round her to amuse her, and a favourite buffoon exhibiting his tricks to please her. The simplicity, the absolute truthfulness of the picture, are entirely satisfying. But my attention was withdrawn from it to Marietta, who stood gazing at it with a look of intense delight, her eyes sparkling, a faint colour tinging her usually pale face, and deepening as from time to time she timidly glanced at Mr. Neville, in reply to some remark of his, or to volunteer some criticism of her own. She

really did look beautiful. Mr. Neville is very decided in his tastes, and considers himself a connoisseur in pictures, and he has rather a patronising tone in talking to young girls, which I could see a little provoked Marietta. He would criticise the Velasquez, and call the colouring cold, which perhaps it is. She asserted her admiration timidly, and he smiled in that rather cynical way of his, and turned away, just as if it was not worth while to talk about painting with anyone who understood so little about it. Marietta came back to me, and Henry Anson joined us, and we went round the gallery together, admiring just what we liked, and thankful not to be obliged to say why. Not but what I should have enjoyed an art lesson from a man like Mr. Neville, if he would have allowed one after all to retain one's own opinion without explanation. But to be led into an argument at every moment, or else to be set down as an idiot, is trying. Every person has a weak point; art I suspect is Mr. Neville's. He is not a conceited man in other matters—and, as a rule, he is remarkably courteous; but with regard to pictures he is a perfect autocrat. Marietta deliberately avoided him the rest of the morning, which I was sorry for. I cannot help thinking he remarked it; and he was not likely to guess the cause.

We were two hours that day in the Museo, devoting ourselves chiefly to Murillo and Velasquez. But the Titians, and Tintoretos, and Raphaels, are most inviting. What one regrets is that the pictures should be so badly arranged, or rather left for the most part without any arrangement; good and bad mingled together, and seen by a misty light which makes its way through glass, green with the dust of ages. The Salon de Isabel is somewhat of an exception. It takes its place with the Tribune of the Pitti, at Florence, and the circular room of the Louvre. To-day we have been to the Academia de San

Fernando to see Murillo's *chef d'œuvre*—St. Elizabeth dressing the sores of the sufferers in a hospital. It is a *chef d'œuvre*; for one can no more bear to look at it than one could (without some strong motive of duty) bear to go through the real ordeal.

Madrid strikes me as brighter every day. The sky is still cloudless, the sun powerful in the middle of the day, but towards evening it becomes bitterly cold, and I have suffered from it, and added to a cold caught on our night journey, by standing in the streets to see the Queen as she passed along the Calle de Alcalá on her way to visit the Infant Don Sebastian. She was in a carriage drawn by eight splendid white mules; a troop of cuirassiers and several other carriages followed. The King was with her. She is very stout, grievously plain, even vulgar-looking; her magnificent purple velvet mantilla and white bonnet scarcely making up for the commonness of her face. The King by her side looked only half a man. There was not the slightest enthusiasm. '*Es la reyna*' I heard one man say contemptuously, as if the sight of the Queen was nothing of importance to anyone.

Sunday was quiet, but unfortunately there was no service at the Ambassador's chapel. The chaplain was gone to England. Marietta and I read the English service by ourselves, and then we went out and saw some churches, and walked round the Buen Retiro Gardens, which are pretty and extensive. They were crowded with gay people, and especially with children dressed out in silks and velvets. Returning to the hotel, we encountered a perfect throng coming back from a bull-fight. So much for a Spanish Sunday. The two gentlemen were with us the greater part of the day, and did not go to the bull-fight. Yesterday we went to the Escorial, or, as I have learnt to call it since I have been in Spain, El Escorial, and the circumstances of the expedition have been important.

Mr. Neville up to that time appeared quite as undecided in his movements as we were, at least he never could tell whether Henry Anson was going on with him to Seville or whether he would return to England by Bayonne. I have been laughing at him a little, ever since we first met, for having a courier. His excuse is that Lady Anson's maternal anxieties had induced him to take one from Bayonne, in order that, if they separated, Henry might not be left alone in the middle of Spain, unable to speak the language. Until yesterday, however, both of them talked as if they were going on together, and Mr. Neville had even proposed to leave the courier as a legacy to me. I should have been only too glad to engage him, for he is extremely civil, and speaks both French and English; but putting aside the question of expense, which would have made it impossible to indulge in such a luxury, the events of yesterday would have quite put a stop to the idea.

We set off for the Escorial at a quarter past seven in the morning, cold, dark, and very miserable; at least I can answer for myself, for I had had but little sleep, my cold being very heavy, and I had nearly lost my voice. The guide-book threatens all visitors to Madrid with severe bronchitis; so I was not quite easy in my mind; and nothing but the impossibility of sending Marietta without me would have induced me to go. Marietta entreated me to give up the expedition; but I am not really delicate, and besides, I did wish above all things to see the Escorial: so we went. The railway train deposited us at a very short distance from a wretched little village which so closely adjoins the Palace that the cottages seem to belong to it. Every one knows everything about the Escorial, or may know it by reading 'Murray.' I think myself that impressions are what one wishes for much more than details, and I candidly confess that my first impression of the Escorial

was that of great disappointment. It looked like a huge hospital, built at the extremity of a stony desert, and under the shelter of some jagged hills, devoid of the dignity of mountains. But then, when I looked upon it, I was cold, and tired, and ill, and moreover seriously uneasy in mind—Marietta and Henry Anson had made such decided advances in the way of intimacy since Saturday. Marietta is unquestionably prejudiced. She never thoroughly appreciated Mr. Neville, and the visit to the Museo seems to have given her quite a dislike to him. Then she is unguarded, and says just what she thinks and feels, and does just what she happens to fancy; and so, as she evidently prefers a young companion, with whom she is free, to an older one who puts rather a restraint upon her, she has (often unconsciously) shown Henry Anson that she would rather be with him, and the effect is very evident. On that Monday morning when we went to the Escorial, Mr. Anson took it as a matter of course that Marietta was to be under his care—to walk with him, to sit by him, to study the guide-book with him—in short, to be his own property; and I confess I was rather vexed with her for not throwing him back more. I cannot say she encouraged him, but her wish to escape from Mr. Neville made her kinder to him than I thought at all wise; and I was pondering seriously in my own mind how I could possibly give her a hint, when we stopped at the village, and gained our first view of ‘El Escorial.’ So strange one’s unexpected associations are! How little I ever thought that Henry Anson and the Escorial would ever be intimately connected in my mind! But so it was to be. We went into the Fonda and ordered breakfast, and whilst it was preparing determined to have our first view of the palace. Mr. Neville ordered everything, and Henry Anson did nothing but try to keep up a bantering conversation with Marietta. I was very cross, and I do not think Mr. Neville

was much better. By this time I think Marietta had become aware of the attentions paid her, and, to do her justice, I am sure she tried then to escape them. But if she left Mr. Anson, she was almost necessarily thrown upon Mr. Neville, whom she evidently did not like ; and I was ungracious enough to wish our two gentlemen away, and very glad when the presence of a guide brought us all together, and prevented *tête-à-têtes*. A hideous building certainly is the Escorial on the exterior, and, though the gridiron legend is interesting, it is not very easy to make out the form. Then the place has a deserted, grass-grown look ; the large courtyards are so silent, the great gateways so cold and white, which is quite different from being grim and grey. There is no poetry in white. The Escorial, indeed, is perfectly unpoetical, except from its situation. That really is grand, just under the Guadarrama range, and overlooking the desert plain of thirty miles stretching away to Madrid. But we entered at the back, and saw nothing at first but the paved courts. It was not until we went into the church that I felt what the grandeur of the place actually was. Nothing, except St. Peter's, ever impressed me so much, and the two are not in the least to be compared. St. Peter's is overpowering from its vastness, but the colouring is light and brilliant, and the effect of its size increases by study. The Church of the Escorial is perfectly simple, but unutterably solemn. Its pervading tone is sombre. The enormous granite piers, and jasper columns, and dark marble walls, only lightened by massive gilding, are taken in at one view. There is nothing to distract the eye, and one's first feeling is that of breathless awe. It is emphatically a royal church. Ferdinand VII.'s polished marble pulpits inlaid with gold medallions are, perhaps, a little too modern and gaudy ; but the material harmonises with the rest of the building, and so one is less inclined to criticise. I walked apart by myself—so, in fact, did we all. Just at that moment, the solemnity of the

religious tone was especially needed, and I suspect we were all thankful to forget ourselves. From the church we went down to the crypt. Porphyry and jasperline the walls, both of the staircases descending into the great octagon vault, and of the vault itself. In the sides of the vault are niches containing the black marble sarcophagi in which lie the bodies of the sovereigns of Spain, beginning from Charles V. Empty niches are waiting, to be filled by those who shall follow hereafter. Only kings and their mothers rest here; the remainder of the royal family are buried in an adjoining catacomb. There is no expression of Christian hope or Christian feeling. It might be a heathen burial-place; perhaps that made it the more awful. The one idea which forced itself on my mind was the strange reality, the enduringness of the past. Within the marble sarcophagi there lay actually the body of the mighty Charles V. It was almost as if he had come to life, and stood before me—so different was the sense of his actual existence which I then had from that which I had ever entertained before!

We none of us (except the guide) uttered a word whilst we were in the crypt. When we came out, Mr. Neville said quietly, ‘I think we shall do well to go back now, and see the rest of the palace after breakfast;’ and he strode away by himself, and then returned, as if ashamed of his forgetfulness. Young Anson talked to the guide. Marietta shrank away from him, drew close to me, and said, ‘There are some sights which are better than sermons,’ and she would not move away from me again.

But we recovered ourselves after breakfast—all except Mr. Neville. The spirit of the gloomy palace seemed to have taken possession of him. He would not talk or admire, or even criticise, when we went again to the palace to see the royal apartments. They are very small, remarkable chiefly for the quiet refined taste shown in the fitting-

up of the rooms, especially in the assortment of colours. There is a great deal of inlaid wood and arabesque painting in them, and the rich silk hangings are superb; but the tone of the whole is singularly simple. I thought this would just have pleased Mr. Neville, but he was very contradictory, and his only remark was that the pictures were execrable. He did rouse himself a little when we were told that we were to see Philip II.'s apartments, and he walked on first with the guide, and asked a good many questions; but this was rather provoking, because it did not give us an opportunity of putting in a word. However, Philip's rooms were so small that we could not help hearing what was said. The reception-room could scarcely have held thirty people, and within was a little chamber quite dark; and beyond that Philip's bedroom, also excessively small. A tiny closet adjoins the bedroom; it opens into the church. Here Philip heard Mass, and here he was brought to die. To be standing there, contrasting the past with the present, made one tremble. History ceases to be history, and becomes biography, when one is brought in this way almost face to face with its prime movers; and biography at once carries one's thoughts beyond this world. We went out of the oratory (if it may be so called) into the cabinet, where Philip was accustomed to work and weave the web of European politics. The very chair in which he sat is still kept there, with the desk at which he wrote, the stool on which he rested his foot—and which was also, I believe, the stool used by Charles V. in the monastery of Yuste. I longed to turn everyone out of the room, and stay there by myself, and think! My companions were not congenial. Henry Anson professes to hate history, and care only for science; Mr. Neville, though a first-rate historian, was too cross to exhibit or, I suspect, to feel sympathy with anything, living or dead; and Marietta

bemoans, as she continually does, her great ignorance, the result of a careless, irregular education. By living abroad, she has gained a thorough mastery of one or two foreign languages, and is in possession of the key to unlock the cabinet of knowledge; but of the contents of the cabinet she knows little or nothing. Travelling with her has made me much more satisfied with the instruction I have been able to give my own children. My darling Cecil would have entered into all that we have been seeing in Spain with delight, she was so very fond of history! But what is there to regret? What do we know which she does not know, and what does she not know which to us is hidden in awful mystery? And only a month ago she was one of us! But I must not think of that.

The history of the rest of our day must be condensed. We wandered through the gardens, and wished it had been summer. They are grand, formal, uninteresting to an English eye—laid out in broad terraces and straight walks, amongst pastures and fountains: only the splendid dreariness of the desert stretching beyond, rich in its yellow stony hue, and its far-distant purple haze, redeem them from ugliness. Again Henry Anson and Marietta were together, I really can scarcely tell how, except that Mr. Neville kept aloof, and that I could not let him walk alone. As we were leaving the palace, on our way back to the railway-station, he said to me, gravely, ‘Are you prepared for the consequences of this day, Mrs. Anstruther?’

I understood him directly, and answered: ‘The question is, Is Lady Anson prepared?’

‘I am afraid not,’ he replied; ‘at least so she gave me to understand before we left England, but I thought then that there was no fear.’

‘Indeed! But Henry Anson’s admiration had been the talk of Dernham for months?’

‘But the feeling was not returned then; it is quite evident now,’ and Mr. Neville laughed.

I cannot say how I disliked the laugh—it was so extremely cold and hard.

‘Really,’ I replied, ‘I don’t see what is to be done; neither you nor I can interfere. After all, though I am Marietta’s friend and *chaperone*, I am not her mother. I have no actual control over her—I can but advise her. And what is there to give advice about? She does and says nothing which anyone can find fault with.’

‘Nothing! Oh no! Miss Randolph always takes care to be perfectly unexceptionable.’

‘But what do you mean?’ I said. ‘You cannot possibly believe that Marietta is really encouraging young Anson wrongly?’

‘Oh no! why should it be wrong? I don’t understand myself why Lady Anson should object to her as she does.’

His tone irritated me beyond expression; I began to wonder that I had ever been able to endure him.

‘I wish Henry Anson would go back to England!’ I exclaimed.

‘Do you, indeed?’ Mr. Neville spoke eagerly, but instantly afterwards added, ‘I doubt if that would mend matters.’

‘I do wish it heartily,’ I repeated; ‘I wish he could go to-morrow. I would leave Madrid myself willingly if I could arrange it. Anything to separate them!’

‘I see,’ he said, ‘you are quite alive to the danger.’

‘I have been made so to-day,’ I replied. ‘I thought before that Marietta did not in the least care for him.’

‘And you don’t think so now?’

‘I think she is open to impression from his attentions; I don’t say more.’

Mr. Neville was silent. We had reached the station, and were waiting for the train to come up. Pretending to be afraid of the cold, I made Marietta sit down in the waiting-room. There was no opportunity for any further conversation till we reached Madrid.

It was long after the hour for the *table d'hôte*, but we had arranged, before we started, to dine all together in an outer saloon. I repented of this now as an imprudence, and suggested to Marietta that, as we were both very tired, and my cold was bad, she and I should have something in our own room. But this was not practicable: we had given our orders, and we were compelled to abide by them. Young Anson was in high spirits; he jarred upon me. I was more silent than I ought to have been, and Marietta kept up the conversation, and jarred upon me more. As for Mr. Neville, he neither ate nor talked, and, as an excuse for himself, declared he had a bad headache.

We went to our own rooms immediately after supper. I could bear my annoyance no longer, and when Marietta took a chair, and sat down by the fire, I most incautiously began:

‘Marietta, my child, you must not be angry with me, but really you must learn to be a little more prudent.’

If a thunderbolt had fallen at her feet, she could not have looked more scared.

‘What?—how? Dear Mrs. Anstruther, what can you mean?’

‘Henry Anson really will think that you care for him, if you give him so much encouragement,’ I said.

‘I! I don’t comprehend. What have I done?’

‘Nothing, except talk; but, you will understand, I should not like observations to be made.’

The colour rose to her cheek, and she replied: ‘It is Mr. Neville’s doing. You need not tell me that. *You* would never have suspected me.’

‘There is no suspicion, my love,’ I said; ‘it is a plain matter of fact. If you are too free——’

She caught up my words—‘Too free! Did Mr. Neville say I was too free? He is cruel—cruel!’ And she hid her face with her hands, and murmured again, ‘Cruel!’

‘My dear,’ I said, ‘this is treating the matter absurdly. I can never venture to give you a caution if you take my words and exaggerate them in this way. Mr. Neville did not say you were too free—neither did I. All that we both of us say is that, if you laugh and talk with Henry Anson in that way——’ (I hesitated, for I was quite sure that whatever I said would be misinterpreted). ‘I mean,’ I continued, ‘that, knowing (as you must know) that he has rather a predilection for you, it would be safe, unless you return the feeling—and even then, it would be better, considering, as Mr. Neville has told me, that Lady Anson’—(what could I say?)—‘dislikes, objects——’ I came to a complete standstill, and wished, more earnestly than I can say, that I had never introduced the subject.

Italian pride came to Marietta’s assistance at the moment, as English awkwardness came to my discomfiture. She stood up and said: ‘I quite understand. You are Mr. Neville’s interpreter; I am greatly obliged to him. Pray tell him so—he need not be in the least uneasy—I will be more guarded for the future.’ Then there was a pause, and she rushed away to the inner room. I did not go near her for nearly an hour. When, at last, I did venture to do so, I found her sitting at the side of her bed, not yet undressed, and looking very mournful. I went up to her and kissed her tenderly. She threw her arms round me, and said: ‘You don’t think so of me,—you won’t agree with him?’

‘Darling!’ I replied, ‘you do Mr. Neville great injustice; but we won’t talk any more about him to-night.’

‘I never wish to hear his name again,’ she exclaimed. ‘But I should like him to know,—yes, I wish with all my heart I could tell him ——’ She stopped suddenly, and burst into tears.

I could but soothe her, urge her to go to bed, and assure her that no one had said anything or thought

anything which could in the least give her real cause for annoyance. She listened, but I did not see that I had made any impression upon her; and at length, really worn out, I was obliged to leave her.

So ended our Escorial day.

This morning [Tuesday], very early, I received a note from Mr. Neville, saying that his plans were finally decided. Mr. Anson would start in the evening for England, with the courier Mariana. His object in writing so early was to beg me to make use of the courier, on this last day, if I had any commissions to execute, or if there was anything I wished particularly to see. Mr. Anson would, of course, be delighted to take back anything to England which we might wish to send. A most sudden resolution—but I am not surprised. Two or three more days here would bring matters to a climax with young Anson, and, whatever the result might be, it would be most awkward. I have seen, from the first, that Mr. Neville did not wish to carry him to the South, though he had no fair excuse for not doing so. To have the care of one young man whilst going in search of another would no doubt be a burden. Henry Anson's departure would cut the Gordian knot of our difficulties, and I am greatly relieved. Marietta made no remark when I told her what had been determined on; she only asked if she might breakfast upstairs, which, though rather an awkward arrangement, was managed for her. I am writing this after breakfast, and whilst waiting for Mr. Neville, who is coming to see me, and talk over plans for the day. He does not start till eight o'clock this evening. The courier has been sent to the post for letters. Up to this time I have had only a few lines from Ina, saying that she was well and happy, and that she had had a short note from nurse: all well at home. I fully expect to hear from Mrs. Bradshaw to-day, for she

has only written once since she heard of our sorrow, and then only a few loving words. Here comes the courier, and—most thankful am I—with a letter in his hand:—

‘Dernham, December 12th.

‘MY DEAR FRIEND,—I never in my life began a letter in a more unsatisfactory mood. I have but a very remote idea that this will reach you, and I cannot therefore bring myself to say anything upon the subject nearest your heart. I will only send you my truest love, and tell you that I have thought and do think of you continually. You will understand the sympathy which cannot be expressed. And now we will turn to other matters, for if my scrawl should ever reach Madrid, it will infallibly die a natural death in the post-office—(Is there such a place in Madrid?)—and there be buried. Under this belief, I shall make it as short as possible. I set too high a value upon my time, and my epistolary powers, to waste them upon the “desert air” (by-the-bye, how much obliged one ought to be to Gray for that line! It always comes to one’s aid in a difficulty); and if people will go to out-of-the-way countries, they must expect to be treated as out-of-the-way themselves. Still, being, as I hope, a Christian, I feel bound to tell you that your children are quite well, and quite happy. Esther has not caught a fever, Hugh has not broken his leg, and Agnes has not yet retired into a nunnery. I have no doubt you have had visions of all these misfortunes haunting you for the last month. Now you may make your mind easy. Also you will be glad to know that the world goes round still, and that Mr. L’Estrange has not turned me out of the Sunday-school, though he has had great temptation to do so; for I have introduced a little book of stories, which I read to the children on a Sunday afternoon, as soon as I begin to hear little snores.

‘Lady Anson is expecting her darling home, and there

are to be great rejoicings on the occasion ; and Miss Lydia Harcourt has sent to Paris for a dress for the ball which is to celebrate the heir's return. Rumour says that Mrs. Randolph is going to be married to a German prince, so I suspect your Spanish journey will prove but a wild-goose chase. I shall not exult over you if it should, but you must allow me to have the gratification of saying to you once, " I thought so." Mr. Neville's young cousin, Frank, came here yesterday with your Charlie. Two boys are better than one, so I begged his friends to spare him for the Christmas holidays. He is a fine fellow, twice Charlie's size, and very manly ; all the better for your boy, who imitates him in everything. My son has taken them out shooting to-day. I shall leave my letter open to assure you that they have returned safe. Frank Neville thinks his cousin (our Mr. Neville) a hero, which is more than I do. He is an unquestionable don, a variety of the human race with which I confess I have no sympathy. But he is doing a good deed now, so Frank tells me—searching after a black sheep, a certain John Penrhyn, a relation or connexion of yours, so far as I can make out. Why do we have relations, and why are they always black? I never yet met with anyone who did not say that he or she could have got on much better in the world if they had had no relations. But this is wandering to abstruse questions, and I don't mean to benefit the Spanish officials who may open my letter by my ideas upon relationship. I forgot—they don't speak (and I suppose don't read) English—a great loss to them, and causing immense confusion in the human mind generally. Don't you always believe (I do) that St. Paul wrote his Epistles—as somebody said—in good plain English? The idea is innate, instinctive—and innate ideas must be true. Good-bye, my dear friend. I never wrote a more stupid letter in all my life. I have come to the

conclusion that the pleasure of letter-writing varies in an inverse ratio to the distance between the correspondents. Really to enjoy it, one ought to send daily notes to one's opposite neighbour. Now that you are in Spain, I have no wish to write to you, except to assure you that I love and think of you, and that you know without being told. This is all surface, as I said at the beginning. I don't venture upon anything else. When I look in your face, I shall know whether to speak or to be silent. Now I feel that silence is best, for at least it cannot jar. Much love to Marietta.

‘Yours, with true affection,
‘C. BRADSHAW.’

‘P.S. The little ones shall put in a small word of their own, and so shall Charlie, who has just come in, in high glee at having aimed at two birds, and missed both.’

Yes, that is an unsatisfactory letter; but Mrs. Bradshaw could hardly be expected to understand how I yearn for little details about my pets. I ought to have written to Drayton, if I wished for a nursery report of them. But they are well, and with that I must be satisfied—more than satisfied—thankful. The rumour about Mrs. Randolph and the German prince is, of course, founded on the intimacy with Baron von Bronnen. It must have been very marked to have reached England. I grieve for the evil report of John Penrhyn; it is worse than anything I have ever heard Mr. Neville say of him. The world seems very blank, now that I have ‘eaten my pudding,’ and found how little there was of it, or in it. And I cannot expect to hear again for the next fortnight, for I have been quite unable to give our address. How earnestly I wish I was going back to England with Henry Anson! But another note from Mrs. Randolph's maid says that it is hoped we shall be at Valencia on Friday.

CHAPTER XIII.

Aranjuez, Fonda de las Cuatro Naciones: December 18.
—Events have crowded on us. After the letter on Tuesday we went out sightseeing—Marietta very unwillingly, her pride had been so deeply wounded; but she was resolved not to show it. Mr. Neville went with us. Henry Anson was engaged all the morning in packing. We went to the Palace and the Armoury, and paid a last visit to the Museo; came back and found that, owing to some blunder of the courier, Mr. Anson could not start till the next day. Marietta professed to have a headache and kept to her room, and we made interest with the waiter to let us dine upstairs. Marietta shut herself up from me completely: I could not break down the barrier, though I tried very hard. We went to bed early. The next morning we were obliged to go downstairs to breakfast, and the first thing I heard was that still there would be a delay in young Anson's movements. I could not make out the cause, but I fancy it had something to do with the *blanchisseuse*. When Mr. Neville came in and heard of the new difficulty, I never saw a countenance express more thorough annoyance. It was so visible as to be absolutely rude, and Marietta too would not utter a word of satisfaction to young Anson. For myself, I scarcely knew what I said. It was intensely awkward. The poor young man looked quite discomfited. After breakfast, Mr. Neville followed me upstairs, and asked if it would be possible to have a few minutes' private

conversation with me. Marietta was in the inner room. Mr. Neville stood by the window, not looking at me—he was absolutely nervous, and so pale! But he began abruptly—

‘Had I quite made up my mind that it would be unwise to allow Miss Randolph and Henry Anson to be any longer together?’

‘Quite,’ I replied.

He paused for several seconds. Then he said, abruptly, ‘I start myself to-night for Cordova.’

‘To-night?’ I exclaimed.

‘Yes, to-night. I have had a letter which makes it imperative upon me to go. I must leave you here under Henry Anson’s protection.’

‘Yes,’ I said, ‘but he goes to-morrow.’

Mr. Neville smiled. ‘You really think he intends it?’

‘Yes, certainly; you have settled it for him.’

‘I beg your pardon; it was his own proposal to go back to England.’

‘But how? Why?’

‘I thought it my duty to put before him his mother’s feelings, and to urge that he should at least wait before he said anything to Miss Randolph. He decided then that he would return home immediately.’

‘And now the attraction is too strong for him. Yes, I see. But what can be done?’

‘May I suggest? It may seem an impertinence.’

‘Pray,’ I exclaimed, ‘suggest—advise—say what you will. I shall only be too grateful. If I could set off for Valencia at once, I would do it—anything to separate them.’

‘What do you say to Aranjuez?’ he replied. ‘It is a place to be seen, and to-morrow you might go to Toledo. That would pass the time till Saturday.’

‘But it is so late to make arrangements,’ I said.

‘The train which I must go by would take you to

Aranjuez. We should start together at eight this evening. But your cold is so bad, it seems cruel to suggest it.'

'The cruelty,' I said, 'would be in leaving me here with these two young people, and no one to help me. If I can once get Marietta away, her thoughts will be diverted. I don't believe the wound is deep, though I would never answer for the effects of propinquity. As for him, "Men have died and worms have eaten them, but not for love."

'He is an excellent young fellow,' said Mr. Neville, 'open-hearted and true, though not very wise; but not fitted for her—not worthy of her. It would be throwing her away, except for the connexion, and she would never think of that.'

Silence again.

'Then it is decided?' I said.

'Decided, if you really feel it to be right. But I don't want to hurry you, and you have not spoken to Miss Randolph.'

'I shall not give her the choice, and she will be grateful to me. She is not in a mood to decide anything for herself. We go this afternoon to the *Sala del Congreso*?'

'Yes; I have tickets for it.'

And he took his leave. He is not a don; Mrs. Bradshaw does him great injustice there. But he is morbidly conscientious, and as fidgety about young Anson as if he had given a solemn pledge that he should never marry Marietta.

I went to Marietta, told her what I had settled, found her quite willing to go, and spent the morning preparing for departure. To the *Sala del Congreso* we went in the afternoon. The deputies were not sitting, because of a discussion going on in the Upper House about the Mexican war. So far as I can understand, there are certain

occasions on which the Commons (as we should call them) are expected to leave their own business, and go to listen humbly to what the superior assembly (the nobles) have to say. We looked into the *Sala*, a handsome circular room, with crimson furniture and frescoed walls; also into the committee-rooms, extremely comfortable, sociable apartments. Then we rushed off to the Upper House. There was a great difficulty about admitting us. We were told there would be no room, as the deputies were filling the gallery. I should have turned back, for I don't understand pressing and bribing. Mr. Neville was bent on entering, but no one would listen. Just then a tall large woman pushed by me. She spoke Spanish fluently, represented herself as English, as especially eager to hear the debate. The officials relented. She turned round to speak to a gentleman behind her, and I recognised Lady Chase. The officials beckoned to them to go forward, and made a sign to us to follow. Mr. Neville happened to be first, and he went on; I could not stop him. The next minute we found ourselves at the door of the deputies' gallery, and were immediately admitted. I whispered to Marietta, 'Don't recognise anyone,' and we seated ourselves as far as possible from our unwelcome neighbour. If Lady Chase knew us, she certainly was as unwilling to own us as we were to own her. I thought the Peers' House scarcely as handsome as the Commons'. The ministers sat on benches lined with green velvet, and having a crown worked in gold upon the back. I was glad to be able to distinguish O'Donnell—a calm, shrewd-looking, middle-aged man, very English in appearance. The members struck me as having a refined gentleman-like air. I could just follow the debate sufficiently to know that the speaker was praising England. But we could not stay long, for more deputies were entering the gallery, and there was not room for us.

We walked home ; and as I was anxious to say a few words in private to Mr. Neville about Lady Chase, we went on in front. I really thought that, after last night's caution, Marietta's manner would be quite sufficient to put a restraint upon Henry Anson ; in fact, she had scarcely spoken to him all day, and this, added to the knowledge that we were to separate that evening, had made the poor young man look quite unhappy. Mr. Neville and I turned into a shop in the Puerta del Sol, to buy some photographs, or, at least, to see if we could find any. We believed that Marietta and Henry Anson were close behind us, and it was not till we had made our purchases that we discovered they were not. I was vexed and annoyed, and blamed myself, but I really did not think it a matter of much consequence till I reached the hotel and went up-stairs. Marietta was there finishing her packing. We were to dine at the *table d'hôte*, and start for Aranjuez at eight o'clock. I saw directly I looked at her that something had happened ; she was so flushed, nervous, and excited ; yet she did not say a word to me, except to ask me to help her in some trifling way, but went on working at the packing, as if it was the one object of her life.

The bell rang for the *table d'hôte*. Marietta started, and I felt sure she was going to say that she would not go down ; but she recovered herself directly, and followed me. Her manner to young Anson was quite changed ; instead of being cold and proud, she made an effort to be kind, and put him at his ease : but it would not succeed. He looked absolutely wretched. At last he asked if we had any message for Pau. He thought it possible he might go there before he returned home. He had never seen the place ; and Colonel and Mrs. Strangways were old friends of his mother's. Mr. Neville turned upon him sharply.

‘Why, Anson, are you mad? You have written to your father to mention the very day you are to be in England; and he won’t stand change.

‘He must stand it,’ was the answer. ‘I don’t know when I shall be at home.’

It was just at the close of dinner, and Henry Anson had spoken so decidedly and almost angrily that several persons, strangers, turned to listen. To get rid of the awkwardness, I hurried Marietta away, with the excuse that we must prepare for our night journey. Directly we were alone, I asked if she could tell the cause of this sudden move.

All her reply was, ‘Dear Mrs. Anstruther, please ask him yourself:’ and the tone in which she spoke so threw me back that I was pained, and showed it. Anything more sweet and loving than she was then, it would be impossible to imagine, but I could get nothing more from her. Time was passing, and the carriage would soon be ready to take us to the station. Mr. Neville, who was to accompany us as far as Aranjuez and there leave us, came up-stairs to see if we were ready and wanted assistance. Henry Anson remained below. It was a bright moonlight night, intensely cold. We needed all our shawls and railway wrappers to keep us warm, and I told Mr. Neville that I did not envy him. He was to go by railway to Santa Cruz, and there to meet the Diligence which would convey him by a journey of thirty hours to Cordova.

‘No,’ he said, he was not to be envied; and when I looked at him I felt that his words were very true. Young Anson might be wretched, but Mr. Neville looked much more so. It was a hurried and most unsatisfactory departure. Henry Anson was standing in the midst of waiters and porters when we said good-bye to him. I could only give him a cordial shake of the hand, and hope

that he would have a comfortable journey with the courier, and that we should meet again soon at Dernham.

He thanked me, and hoped the same; but there was no heartiness in the tone.

Marietta's farewell was shorter, but I doubt if it was as cold. Her hand rested in his, and she did not attempt to withdraw it. I think Mr. Neville noticed this, for he watched them narrowly, and when he handed Marietta into the fly and spoke to her about her luggage, it was almost as if he was addressing a naughty child.

We travelled together for an hour. Mr. Neville made acquaintance with an English gentleman, and talked of Spain and its prospects; the fertility of the land, which, when irrigated, will produce, it is said, four crops a year;—the success of the Alicante railway, which pays eleven per cent. I envied him for being able so to distract his thoughts; though my cold was so bad that I was for that reason thankful to be quiet. The hour was very short: latterly I fell asleep, and I was actually dreaming of England when the train stopped at the Aranjuez station. A more glorious night I never saw. Such a moon, and such a clear sky! But oh! the cold! I dreaded being turned out into the open air; and my heart sank at the thought of parting from Mr. Neville. It made me feel so unprotected. For the moment I wished heartily that we had remained at Madrid. We had but a very few moments for farewell. Mr. Neville got out of the carriage with us to give us some assistance, but he was ordered in again directly, as we were saying good-bye. I asked him when we might meet again. 'He did not know, perhaps never. He was going back to England, but he should not remain there. He thought he should try the Indian Bar.' It was the first time I had ever heard him suggest the possibility. There was a half-uttered exclamation from some one close to me. I looked

round. It must have been Marietta, for no one else was near; but she had turned deliberately away to speak to a porter, and before I could recall her attention the train moved on.

Ten minutes' walk to the hotel! That was the information we received from the little guide who undertook to convey us thither. A strange ghastly and ghostly walk it was in the moonlight;—along a path-way leading us by the stately buildings of the palace, the centre and side-wings of which fronted the gardens, all cut and squared, and railed in with high iron-work, and looking colder than the cold moon. Where we were going we could not see. The palace buildings cast dark shadows around us; but something there was in the distance, it might be trees, it might be a house, but I could perceive no lights.

We had miscalculated our plan. The Cuatro Naciones might be a very pleasant abode in summer—well-furnished, because requiring scarcely any furniture; well-attended and appointed, because the palace would ensure a certainty of guests; but in the depth of winter, with the court at Madrid, what could possibly bring visitors there? I am sure this must have been the mental query of the landlord when we entered the cold stone passage of the half-dismantled hotel and asked for rooms.

'The whole house was at our disposal. There was but one person there besides ourselves—an English gentleman. We could have coffee, an omelette, eggs; but fire?—no, there was not a room with a fire-place. But there was a *sala* in which a brazier of charcoal was burning; we might have our supper there; it would be very comfortable; we could sit round it and warm our feet; and we could not surely wish for anything more.' And forthwith we were ushered along another stone passage, our footsteps echoing through the silent house, and were introduced into the

said *sala*. And we did crouch over the charcoal, and try to think it was warm, and we did have our supper in the *sala*, and endeavoured to persuade ourselves that we were not very uncomfortable. But it would not do. We were both too tired and disconsolate to hide our misery, and by mutual consent we went to bed simply to get warm. Perhaps it was a good thing that our bodily discomforts distracted our attention from mental worries. I felt ashamed of myself for feeling depressed and timid at being again without a gentleman, and I suspect Marietta sympathised with me, though she would not own it. When I asked her if she did not wish we could have kept Mr. Neville with us to take care of us, her instant reply was, 'We shall do much better without him. He would have been quite in the way to-night.' And so he would, but still I wished for him. Henry Anson's name was not mentioned by either of us, and I fell asleep pondering upon the experience of the day, and the meaning of that last clasp of the hand which I had remarked as we left the Peninsulares.

This morning (Thursday) we were up at a quarter to seven, breakfasted soon after eight, and went out to see the palace. We were told by the porter that there was no admittance, but we soon found that the refusal was merely a matter of form. The man was really only too glad to take us over it, and show us the grand staircase, and the private apartments of the Queen and her husband (I never can think of him as King). There was a good deal to interest one, because of the royal associations, but in itself the palace is nothing. I observed the same kind of quiet taste in colour as at the Escorial. The most singular of the Queen's apartments was one room, the walls of which were covered with porcelain from a porcelain manufactory in Madrid. The King's apartments were quite plain. One room was entirely ornamented with little rice-paper

pictures, Chinese. There was a piano in it (the King is very fond of music), with some very common chairs, but little furniture besides. The gardens, no doubt, are charming in summer. Anything green in the midst of the great Madrid desert must be doubly delightful. In winter they are for the most part simply formal and uninteresting; long walks and avenues by the side of straight narrow canals, with fountains and statues at intervals. Beyond, there is something more like a natural wood, where trees and grass are allowed to grow as they will; but Aranjuez is entirely a made place, and if it were in any other situation, would be thought nothing of. I liked seeing it though, and was especially glad to be able to do so, because it interested Marietta. She seemed more herself again, the restraint of the last few days being over; and yet she was not quite herself, because she shut herself up from me, and that she never did before.

We were to be at the railway station by ten o'clock, for we had arranged to go over to Toledo for the day; so after seeing the palace, we hurried back to the hotel to collect our things together. I was standing in the entrance waiting for a porter to take some of the *petites bagages* to the railway station, as we intended to walk, when my eye fell upon the direction of a small English portmanteau which had been placed near my carpet-bag. 'John Penrhyn, Fonda de Paris, Valencia.' I drew Marietta's attention to it. 'It can be no one else,' I said; 'and Mr. Neville is gone in the wrong direction. What a blunder!'

'We are not sure' said Marietta. 'There may be more than one John Penrhyn in the world.'

'But scarcely in Spain. I suppose we can do nothing. Yet I wish I could see Mr. Penrhyn. He must be the one English gentleman here. It is immensely unfortunate.'

'*Es muy tarde*, Señora,' interrupted the porter, and

catching up the carpet-bags, he walked off with them, and we were obliged to follow.

I tried to ask something about the portmanteau and its owner, but my Spanish was deficient; and though I think I made my question understood, I could only gather a half intelligible reply. I believe we were told that the gentleman's train would not start till after ours. Anyhow, we did not see an Englishman at the station. So whether John Penrhyn was really John Penrhyn, and what was his object in going to Valencia, remains still a mystery. I have thought since that it was quite as well we did not meet, for Mr. Neville might not wish him to know that he was in Spain, and we could scarcely have avoided mentioning the fact.

But we are destined to be haunted by people whom it is awkward to meet. We had one companion at first in our carriage, a most respectable Spanish gentleman, who ensconced himself in a corner in complete English fashion, said nothing, and left Marietta and myself to enjoy without interruption the pretty neighbourhood of Aranjuez—pretty, that is, by contrast with utter barrenness, and pretty prospectively; for one had to imagine leaves on the trees, and flowers on the banks. Still it was refreshing to see something which might by possibility be some day green. And then it was warm; the sun was really powerful, and we began to recognise that the icy winds of Madrid were actually things of the past. I daresay I enjoyed it all the more because I have been so wretched lately with my very bad cold, and to-day, for the first time, I felt that it was departing.

But quietness was not to be ours. At a small station, I forget the name, a little way from Aranjuez, and just where the green oasis ceased, a lady and two gentlemen, or rather a woman and two men, entered the carriage;—Lady Chase, Baron von Bronnen, and another man of the same

stamp. Marietta glanced at me, and her colour went and came very quickly. I took out a book and began to read. Marietta did the same. Our new companions looked at us—whispered—looked again. I saw them, although I was pretending to read. Lady Chase was sitting on the same side with Marietta, and the Spanish gentleman was between them. I was opposite to Marietta. Presently Lady Chase bent forward and said to Marietta, ‘Surely I cannot be mistaken;’ and she held out her hand.

Marietta drew back, made the stiffest of bows, and continued reading.

The repulse was so evident, that the Spaniard looked round in amazement. Lady Chase laughed a bold, most disagreeable laugh, and turning to her friends, spoke to them in French; but what she said I did not hear, and, in fact, I did not take the trouble to listen. How uncomfortable I felt I really cannot say: I thought nothing of the scenery, or where we were going, or what we were to see; all I cared for was to be free from this intolerable woman. And really she made herself intolerable, worse a great deal than I could have imagined. The whole party indeed were odious. They laughed and talked, and bringing out a luncheon basket, ate and drank in such a way that I felt actually ashamed that the stately Spaniard should see what English people can be. When at length we stopped at the station at Toledo, they got out first and walked on, and the Spaniard, turning to me, said quietly, ‘*no es buena*,’ to which I could only assent, with great inward thankfulness that the party had left us. A little omnibus was in waiting, and we and several other persons, amongst them our Spanish friend, crowded into it, and crossed the Tagus by the Puente de Alcantara, a bridge that has an old Moorish tower at the end, flanked by a double row of city walls, over which the tall houses look down, keeping watch upon all intruders into the city. We rattled

walk to this convent took us outside the town, and along the side of the rocky hill, overlooking what the guide-book calls the wild and melancholy Tagus. And such it certainly is, and Toledo on its rocky hills is to me one of the most wild and melancholy places, as regards situation, which I ever visited. But in the month of December one is no judge of scenery. Tradition says that a Moorish princess once had a country palace in the neighbourhood, and that the gardens were known as *la huerta*, or the orchard. I would on no account deny the fact, but as I looked down upon *la huerta* from the height on which stands the Alcazar, I could see nothing to lead me to believe in its charms. It was the last place we visited, that Alcazar. How far back it dates I do not pretend to say, but it was a fortress in the time of the Moors, and the Cid was its first Christian governor; and it was enlarged and inhabited by Ferdinand and Isabella, and Charles the Fifth, and finished by Philip the Second, and burnt by Napoleon, and so it is a complete compendium of Spanish history: and I was thoroughly interested as I walked through the forsaken *patio*, or court, which is surrounded by a beautiful arcade, and looked up at the grand staircase and the remains of the splendid granite pillars, supporting an upper gallery. I might even have felt something like excitement, if I had not been interrupted in my meditations by the most unwelcome apparition of our travelling companions. We came upon them suddenly, as we were going up the great staircase to the gallery. I believe myself that they had been watching us from the gallery. Anyhow, they came down as we were going up, and stopped and compelled us to speak. Baron von Bronnen expressed extreme gratification at meeting us, and was especially delighted to recognise me. Lady Chase forced herself upon me, and 'knew me perfectly well, though she had never had the pleasure of an

introduction. How long had we been in Spain? Where were we going? How did we like the country?’

One might have thought we had been on the most intimate terms, and the Baron began to explain his movements, and why he had come to Spain instead of going to Switzerland. I really made no reply, and tried to move on, but was literally stopped and questioned again, in such a way that I could not help suspecting a motive. My spirit was roused then, and I said boldly, ‘You must excuse me, but our time is short;’ and I turned round and went down the stairs, these people following me. They left the *patio* with us. Lady Chase came close up to Marietta, who was walking just behind me, and said, ‘You are going to your poor aunt, I know, tomorrow. I send my fond love to her. I only wish it were possible for me to be with her. And would it be asking too great a favour? I have written a little note to her; would you take charge of it?’ Marietta hesitated. I caught the last words, and without giving Marietta time to answer, I turned, and said, ‘Your note will go more safely by the post, Lady Chase. Marietta, we have no time to lose.’ And I hurried on, Marietta with me, and at last we were free of them. We were only just in time for the omnibus which was to take us to the station. I was quite glad to find our Spanish friend prepared to return with us. He seemed really a protection, for I was dreadfully afraid those people would come into the carriage again. Marietta was much distressed. ‘She felt haunted,’ she said: ‘wherever these people came, misery followed. But it was a comfort to think they were not to be at Valencia.’

It was a comfort I could not enter into, for I thought then, and I think still, that Lady Chase had only one object in thus pursuing us—to find out our destination. She would not go to Mrs. Randolph to comfort her in

her illness, but she would go to her to guard her from Marietta's influence; and I should not be in the least surprised to meet her at Valencia, if not when we arrive, at least immediately after us. It has been a most unpleasant ending to what would otherwise have been an enjoyable day. And it opens a prospect of perplexity for the future; for how can I leave Marietta in Spain with the chance of being brought into contact with such people? And yet, if Mrs. Randolph should be—as I suspect she is—extremely ill, how can I take Marietta away? At such times as these I always try to remember how I used to look and wonder when I was going up the Rhine—seeing the river in one or two places shut in by cliffs, and not the slightest appearance of an opening; and yet, how, by degrees, the way disclosed itself, and we passed through easily. One's whole life is, in fact, nothing else than such a winding river.

December 29: Valencia Fonda del Cid.—Adventures still! at least I don't know what else to call them. We left Aranjuez yesterday morning at ten, and had a tremendously long journey, and an unutterably dreary one—nothing but stone, and sand, and low hills, and miserable little villages of mud hovels for hours and hours. In fact, we did not see any scenery approaching to pretty the whole day; for though the country in the neighbourhood of Valencia is said to be beautiful, it was too dark to be visible. There was only one place at which we could have slept, Almansa, a great junction for the Alicante and Valencia railway, and even against this we had been warned. I feel I shall do injustice to Spain by my impressions of it. There must be great beauty in the south, but the middle and northern districts are really hopeless;—solitary and desert, without the grandeur of desolation. One feels that the only thing to be done is to rush away from and forget them. The train was more than an hour

late, and we did not reach Valencia till eleven o'clock at night, far too late to think of making any enquiries for Mrs. Randolph. As we were collecting our luggage, and arranging with the driver of a *tartana*, a most primitive kind of tilted cart, the only apology for a cab to be found in Valencia, I was accosted by a French Commissionnaire, a portly, consequential person, though very civil, who begged to know if I had not come from Aranjuez.

'Yes,' I said; 'I, and another lady; we had just arrived.'

'Quite right. He had been told we should be there. The gentleman had desired him to say that there would be rooms for us at the Fonda de Paris.'

'It must be a mistake,' I said; 'we knew no gentleman in Valencia; and we were going to the Cid.'

The man persisted: it could not be a mistake; we had been at Toledo.

'Yes, no doubt, we had been at Toledo.'

'And we were expected at Valencia, there could be no mistake.'

'But it is a mistake,' I said, a little hastily. 'We know no one; and we are decidedly going to the Cid.'

As I spoke, a vision of Lady Chase and her friends came before me. The message, I felt sure, must be intended for them. The Commissionnaire insisted he was right. I asserted more strongly he was wrong. He was vexed and discomfited, though still not at all uncivil. 'Monsieur Duville,' he said, 'had sent him. He was to look for two English ladies who had been at Toledo.'

'Je ne connais pas Monsieur Duville,' was my reply, 'et nous allons au Cid.'

I walked away, full of dignity and importance, feeling sure we were the victims of some conspiracy, and firmly resolved — as a lady should be — not to be taken in. Marietta, who had kept aloof during the dialogue with the Commissionnaire, said to me quietly as we were going out of the station, 'It can't be Mr. Neville, can it?'

‘Oh no!’ I exclaimed, ‘impossible; unless——’ I thought of John Penrhyn, and stopped. There did seem a kind of connection of ideas, a something which seemed to make it possible that Mr. Neville had changed his plans; but then he had actually started for Cordova, his luggage had been sent on beforehand from Madrid. No, it could not be; and I put aside the idea, and Marietta did not recur to it again. I confess I began a little to repent my extreme determination when we arrived at the ‘Cid,’ for it was all but quite full. A prince of Barbary was expected, so we were told, and all the rooms were engaged except one at the back. At that late hour, however, any room was a welcome shelter, and we established ourselves without delay in an apartment which, after all, was not so very uncomfortable. The Spanish fashion of putting the beds into recesses, and leaving the outer part of the room to be used as a *salon*, is certainly very convenient when two people must be together.

And now we were actually at the end of our travels, and I began to think, and so did Marietta, and our thoughts were by no means pleasant. The poor child had been kept up during the journey by the novelty and the sense of self-sacrifice, and something like a spirit of adventure. But now that the cold reality was dawning upon her, made darker and more alarming by the possibility of Lady Chase’s neighbourhood, her heart misgave her. What could she do? After all, would it be possible for her to be of any use to her aunt? If these people were to be with Mrs. Randolph, her influence would be certainly neutralised.

It was just what I had said to myself, and I at once proposed that if we found Lady Chase and her friend established here we should simply leave them and return home. But the strength of Marietta’s will came out then. No; she felt herself pledged; she had promised

her uncle to guard his wife ; it was his dying request ; and she had agreed to it, and her word was sacred. She had found her aunt, and she would guard her. It was sinful weakness to draw back and be afraid. She entreated me not to urge her, not to put the temptation before her ; and then came such a burst of love, and tender recollections of Dernham, and her happiness there ; of Ina, and Agnes, and the children, and our darling who had been taken from us : and the longing to remain with us, and the bitter, bitter pain at the prospect of parting ; it went to my very heart. ‘ Dear child,’ I began, ‘ if I had thought it would have been such a trial——’

But she interrupted me. ‘ You would not have done differently, or I could not have consented. I must do the right. I could not live if I did not. It would wear my heart away to feel that I was not doing it. And I shall be brave to-morrow, but to-night I am so very tired.’ And then she kissed me, and smiled one of her own bewitching smiles, more really like a ray of sunshine than any other smile I ever saw ; and almost instantaneously she was herself again, strong in self-control, and bent upon going through life with her face raised to confront every—even the sternest duty.

CHAPTER XIV.

Fonda de las Cuatro Naciones, Barcelona : December 27.

—Not quite a week since I last wrote my journal. It seems months! I could not write before, it was impossible. Now I must try to gather up the thread of events as best I may. A year hence all that has happened will seem so unreal that I shall scarcely be able to persuade myself that I have really passed through it.

The night of our arrival at Valencia (the 19th) I went to bed rather anxious about the meeting with Mrs. Randolph on the morrow, but upon the whole more comfortable than I had been for some time; partly because we had actually reached the end of our journey, we had said good-bye to waiting and sight-seeing, but chiefly because I felt confidence in Marietta's good sense and judgment, and was sure that whatever she decided upon doing she would be able to carry out bravely.

The next morning our first thought was, of course, to find out Mrs. Randolph.

We took a Commissionnaire and walked to the Fonda de Paris. Valencia is not a very large place, and we were not tempted to try a *tartana* again. Anxious and uncomfortable as I was, I could not help enjoying the novel look of the narrow streets, with their pretty balconies; and the peep into the *patios* of some of the best houses was most inviting, the arched colonnades, and wide staircases with carved balustrades, giving an idea of wealth and

He and some other person were doing what I had been doing, pacing the corridor. I drew back that I might not be noticed, and when they came so near that I could scarcely manage to hide myself, I retreated further into a dark empty recess, intended, I suppose, according to Spanish custom, for a bed.

I had scarcely done so when the two men entered the ante-room. They did not close the door, but only stood behind it as I had done. I fancied they wished to avoid some one, and I expected they would go out again directly. Therefore I did not discover myself. Perhaps I ought to have done so, but I was so taken by surprise, and I had such a great aversion to the Baron, that I could not make up my mind at the moment, especially as, for the first few seconds, they were quite silent. But then the Baron spoke, and, to my surprise and regret, he was answered by John Penrhyn; I could not see the face of the latter, but I had no doubt whatever as to his voice. It is very sweet, with a singularly soft and refined intonation; scarcely, perhaps, manly enough, yet extremely winning. I gathered that he had arrived that morning by the railway from Alicante; but then a good deal was unintelligible, till I caught the words: 'It is no use delaying, I have been a fool to stay so long.'

'Good little boy!' said the Baron, ironically, and he went off into a long harangue in German, which I did not clearly hear, and if I had heard, I should probably not have understood, yet which kept me in an agony of impatience and annoyance.

John Penrhyn's German was not fluent; he relapsed again into English and became eager and excited. I made out that he was lamenting some ill-luck at cards.

'It will be right next time,' said the Baron; 'if you can only get off now. We shall meet at Barcelona, and I promise to give you another chance.'

‘It might be better to face it all,’ was the rejoinder. ‘It must come sooner or later.’

‘Now hearken,’ said the Baron: ‘I am older; I know more, a good deal, in these matters than you. What Neville cares for isn’t the fifty pounds, and what you care for isn’t that. Keep things quiet, and go, and I can settle matters at our leisure. Only be off; he is at Cordova now, but he won’t be there long. Don’t wait to be caught. The *Reyna* sails at four.’

‘I should not be caught,’ said John, proudly; ‘I should tell my own tale voluntarily.’

‘And be carried to England a disgraced schoolboy! What a fool you are!’

‘My folly has been in listening to you,’ was the indignant reply. ‘If I go to Barcelona, it is not to escape Neville.’

‘But to get back to England the quickest way you can,’ said the Baron. ‘Be it so; only remember there is such a thing as honour.’ And again he broke into German.

By this time I was utterly miserable. I had heard far more than I intended—far more than was meant for my ear. I felt that I could bear it no longer; and I was upon the point of coming forward, when John Penrhyn replied in an angry tone to the Baron’s speech, and breaking from him rushed down the corridor. The Baron closed the door behind him, and sitting down to the little table which stood against the wall, drew forth a pocket-book, and began to make memoranda.

My shame and fright were indescribable.

His back was towards me, and for a moment I thought whether it would be possible for me to glide by him unobserved; but it was impossible. The door was closed; I could not open it noiselessly. There was no alternative; and boldly in appearance, though with a quaking heart, I stepped forth from my hiding-place.

The Baron started, and the expression of his face was

something not to be forgotten. 'I am afraid,' I said, 'there has been some mistake. The waiter showed me into this room, and told me I might wait here.'

He rose, and drawing close to me, he seized both my hands, and said, as he looked at me fixedly—

'You are a spy;' and he grasped my wrists so fiercely that I could scarcely help crying out, and repeated very slowly, 'You are a spy.'

I was calm—I was too frightened to be otherwise—and I answered as slowly:

'I am waiting for Miss Randolph; I came into this room by mistake. Release me, sir, or I shall call for assistance.'

'Call!' he said, 'and who will come? You are a spy.'

'And you,' I replied, 'profess to be a gentleman; act as a gentleman, and release me.'

His grasp was still fiercer, but his tone became quieter.

'After all,' he said, 'you have heard nothing.'

'Nothing of consequence,' I answered; 'nothing that can do harm.'

'No, nothing; yet, as it is nothing, you shall promise that you will not repeat or reveal it.'

'I will promise anything,' was my reply. 'I have heard but a few words; I could only partially understand them.'

'But you know him—the young fellow who is gone?'

'Oh, yes, I know him—Mr. Penrhyn.'

'And you bind yourself neither to repeat a word, nor to say that you have seen him?'

I hesitated; the man's look became threatening.

'You had better,' he muttered.

I was so excessively terrified that my mind became, as it were, a blank. I could think neither of what was asked of me, nor of what the consequences might be. I cared only to escape, and I exclaimed hastily—

‘Oh! yes, I promise. There is no one to tell, no one who would care—I promise.’

‘And I trust you,’ he said; ‘spy or no spy, I trust you. If you are unworthy of trust, revenge is easy—and sure.’

He released my hands, and I hurried out of the room and sank down upon the floor of the corridor, faint with terror. A waiter came by, but he could only speak Spanish. I managed to ask for a glass of water, which he brought me, and then looking at me in extreme astonishment, left me, I imagine intending to find some one to assist me; but before he could return, I was sufficiently recovered to stand; and when he brought back a Frenchman, I declined any physical help, but explained that I was waiting for a friend, who was with an English lady, Mrs. Randolph. ‘Would the waiter go to her? would he tell her I was not well? I wished to go home directly.’ I said it all quite quietly;—I felt stunned. Only when I looked at the door of the room where the Baron still was, it required all my self-control to prevent myself from rushing away, in the dread I felt lest he should appear again.

I don’t know how long I stayed; it seemed half an hour, it might have been less. I thought the waiter had forgotten me. I again paced the corridor, but my brain seemed still bewildered: it was as if I could not understand anything clearly. Several persons, from time to time, came into the corridor, but none took any notice of me further than to stare and pass on. I went at last to the further end, and made my way into a passage beyond, and there, to my immense relief, I stumbled upon the French waiter, busy in ushering a new party, just arrived, into their rooms. I stopped him, asked why he had not come back to me, and he smiled at me quite civilly and answered, ‘Did not Madame know? He was very sorry; he had sent a message. The young lady was gone.’

‘Gone!’ I repeated, ‘when? where?’

‘He did not know; he could tell nothing;’ and with a little impatient shrug of the shoulders, he devoted himself again to his new charge, and I turned back into the corridor and descended the staircase. At the bottom I found the Commissionnaire who had brought us to the Fonda; Marietta, I supposed, would be with him.

The man was waiting. ‘He had not seen Mademoiselle; she had not been there. He must have seen her if she had passed.’

I was surprised, but Marietta, I knew, was independent. Missing me, she might have chosen (though it would have been very unwise) to walk back to the hotel by herself. I prepared a lecture for her; but when I reached ‘The Cid,’ and went up to our rooms, Marietta was not there. Then I did feel uncomfortable. To miss each other in this unaccountable way in a Spanish town was excessively awkward. But still I was scarcely what could be called uneasy. I felt sure there must be some blunder, and taking the Commissionnaire with me, I went back to the Fonda de Paris. On my way I asked some questions about the vessel—the *Reyna*.

‘Where was it going?’

‘To Barcelona,’ was the answer. ‘It was one of the steamers which called at different places on the coast. They were not exact as to time. People never knew when they would arrive or when they would start, but, as soon as they came in, a paper was put up in the office, to give notice when they would be off again. Did I seek for further information? If so, the office was quite close; in fact, we were just passing it.’

Something—I scarcely know what—induced me to agree to this suggestion. I followed the Commissionnaire into the office, and saw the bills pasted against the wall giving notice that the *Reyna* would start for Barcelona at four o’clock.

By this time it was two. Very little chance there was of my meeting John Penrhyn, yet I looked at every stranger anxiously ; I longed so much to see the face of an English friend.

Still more did I long for it after my second visit to the Fonda de Paris. Lady Chase herself came to speak to me. She did not ask me into her apartment ; but she looked me boldly in the face, told me that Mrs. Randolph was extremely ill, and could see no one, and assured me that Marietta had gone more than an hour ago.

At the very moment she spoke I felt she was telling me a lie, and I turned from her with a feeling of frightened despair. I walked out of the hotel. The Commissionnaire inquired where I would go next. I paused in utter bewilderment. ‘ Would I like to go into the Glorieta—the public garden ? Every stranger should see the Glorieta.’ A desperate hope seized me that perhaps I might find John Penrhyn there. A man’s help, a man’s counsel were what I needed ; and we went to the Glorieta. I know little what it was like. I believe there were straight walks, and orange-trees and little statues ; and I remember the Commissionnaire took me across a bridge over the narrow, dried-up Guadalquivir, and made me look back and admire the Eastern look of the town, with its domes and palm-trees ; but the one thought in my mind was to find John Penrhyn. Marietta was then secondary. She was not lost—I knew the idea was an absurdity ; but my belief, my firm belief, was that Lady Chase, for purposes of her own, was bent upon preventing her return to me. I wandered about till half-past three. Then a sudden thought struck me. I would go to the harbour. If the steamer was to sail at four, and if John Penrhyn really intended to go by her, that would be my best and indeed my only chance of meeting him. The hope gave me fresh courage, and, though nearly worn out with fatigue

An exclamation rose to my lips, but was checked in the utterance. The basilisk eye was upon me, and I said nothing.

‘I don’t regret it,’ continued Mr. Neville; ‘at least I shall not if I can be of any use to you, and if you won’t reject me. And how is Miss Randolph?’

‘Where? rather,’ I said very gravely, and for a moment I was tempted to confront the Baron, and in Mr. Neville’s presence, insist upon his taking me to Marietta; but prudence whispered that I might do mischief by betraying my suspicions, and I merely said, ‘Get into the carriage with me and you shall hear;’ so I jumped in without waiting for assistance. Mr. Neville undertook to dismiss the Commissionnaire; and whilst he was speaking to him the Baron came close to me and murmured in my ear ‘Remember!’ Then he lifted his hat from his head with an air of the most profound courtesy, and drew back amongst the crowd.

‘A rascal if ever one breathed!’ exclaimed Mr. Neville, looking after him and then seating himself beside me; ‘but tell me, what do you mean? How is—Marietta—Miss Randolph? over-fatigued, ill, unhappy?’ He stopped.

‘Gone, I cannot tell where,’ was my reply; and driving through the narrow streets, and over the rough pavement in our jolting conveyance, I told him all that had occurred. I watched his face as he spoke, hoping to make out what he thought, and whether there was any real cause for uneasiness. But he was imperturbable. Only at the end he said, ‘Of course she is with Mrs. Randolph.’

‘Of course she is,’ I said; ‘Marietta is no baby to be lost in a foreign town. But the people who can tell such falsehoods must have some strong motive for it, and how, in spite of them, am I to get hold of her?’

‘Leave it to me,’ was the reply; ‘let me take you home, and then leave it to me.’

How thankful I was to be able to do so no words can say. We drove back to ‘The Cid,’ and I rushed up the stairs with a vague hope that possibly we might find Marietta there. But no; the room was precisely as I had left it;—Marietta’s writing-case on the table, by it the Guide-Book which she diligently studied, her umbrella in the corner. I noticed all the little things with a kind of prophetic pang. It was not fear, but a feeling that in some way she was to be no longer mine. Mr. Neville waited but a moment, his face had shown his disappointment when he first entered the room; but he only looked round and said, ‘I thought not; you shall hear of her in another hour,’ and then hastened away.

I did not take off my bonnet and shawl; I did not feel that I could do anything but sit quite still just where he left me, for when I found myself alone the feeling of suspense awoke again; and it increased, as time went by and Mr. Neville did not return. We were to have dined at the *table d’hôte*, but the dinner hour came and passed, and I took no notice of it till I was conscious of being faint and hungry, and then I had recourse to our luncheon basket; and afterwards I walked up and down the room, and going to the window, looked out into the narrow back street; then, hearing a noise of people collecting together, I went out into the corridor to inquire what was the cause, and confronted the Prince of Barbary, a black man in a kind of Oriental dress, who was coming up the stairs, followed by a train of attendants and the obsequious landlord; and then a band in the square opposite began to play an air from the ‘Trovatore,’ in bad tune and worse time, and I followed the notes one after the other, with a nervous desire to rush out and put them right, and went back to my room still going over the tune, still

dwelling upon the wrong time, just as if it were the one thing of consequence, the one necessity for me that it should be put right.

At seven o'clock Mr. Neville returned. I heard his step in the corridor, and hurried to meet him. He was alone, and my heart sank.

But his first words were reassuring. 'We were right. She is there.'

'And you have seen her?'

'Yes, and brought a note from her.'

He gave it me, and I tore it open and read aloud:—

'DEAREST MRS. ANSTRUTHER,—I must stay here, my poor aunt is so ill. I cannot bear to leave you alone. Will you let my trunk be sent to me? We shall meet to-morrow.

'Yours most affectionately,

'M. R.'

'And why did she not let me know this before?' I exclaimed, in what I am aware was a tone of disappointed irritability.

'Because she had done so,' was the dry answer.

'What do you mean?'

'Miss Randolph wrote you a longer note; it was given to Lady Chase to give to you. She came back and said you were gone, but that the note had been despatched by a porter.'

'But it was false,' I exclaimed.

'Not at all,' continued Mr. Neville, still in the same dry, almost sarcastic tone. 'If you remember, you did go.'

'But why did Lady Chase herself send me away a second time without telling me of the note; and why did she say that Marietta had left the Fonda?'

'Because she believed it, fully believed it. The assurance is given on Lady Chase's honour;' and Mr. Neville laughed—a mocking laugh—'Marietta—I beg her

pardon, Miss Randolph—was with her aunt; Lady Chase did not know this; she understood she was gone, and said so. It is all quite simple, quite clear.'

'Not to me,' I said, 'neither to you. Why should Marietta have written to me and entrusted the note to Lady Chase, if she intended to return to me?'

His manner changed. 'The woman is as false as hell,' he exclaimed, 'but she is as clever as Satan.'

'And did she say all this herself?' I inquired.

'Yes, with an unblushing face, after keeping me waiting nearly two hours under pretence of being engaged. I should not have seen Miss Randolph at last if I had not insisted upon it in a way which showed her I was not to be trifled with.'

'And when Marietta came, what did you get from her?'

'Surprise, and this note. She thought I was at Cordova.'

'And you explained?'

'No, I explained nothing. Lady Chase stayed in the room, and I was not going to say before her that I came here in search of John Penrhyn.'

'And did Marietta say nothing more about her aunt? Did she send no message, no love?'

'Oh yes, a great deal of love, but she was called away in the middle of her message. Mrs. Randolph wanted her.'

'Most unsatisfactory,' I said.

'Yes, most unsatisfactory.' And then we sat and looked at each other in silence, till Mr. Neville got up and took his hat.

'Are you going?' I said. 'Can't you stay? But you would be better on the spot where Marietta is.'

'I can do nothing,' he replied, 'and I must start to-night for Alicante.'

'To-night?'

‘Yes, I must, without delay, make my way to Malaga to see after John Penrhyn.’

I started; I was upon the very point of saying, ‘He is not there;’ but the recollection of my promise to the Baron checked me, and I only exclaimed hurriedly, ‘and Marietta and I must be left?’

‘It is very ungallant, very uncourteous, but I have no alternative.’

‘Mr. Neville,’ I said, ‘I think you and I understand each other. Ungallant, uncourteous, are words which, under present circumstances, have no meaning. I say to you truly that I am very anxious about Marietta’s position, that I want advice and help; and I ask you very earnestly to stay.’

‘Mrs. Anstruther, I say to you in answer, that I would cut off my right hand to please, to help’—the colour flushed to his face and faded away like a girl’s—‘to be of service to you, but I must go. You may trust to me, however, to return almost immediately; and in the meantime I have an English friend resident here, a merchant, to whom you may apply in any difficulty.’

‘But why go? what for? what motive?’ I knew I spoke quite incoherently; and Mr. Neville looked at me in utter astonishment.

‘Are you so very much alarmed?’ he said.

‘Not alarmed, oh no, nothing can happen, but I entreat you not to go.’

‘I fear it is my duty,’ he said, calmly.

‘But there may be another duty, a contrary one.’

‘I don’t understand. If you want protection I will do my best to find out some one here who will protect you.’ I could discover a slight tone of contempt in his voice. He looked upon me as a weak woman, given up to absurd fears; but I cared not for his opinion. I felt I must keep him at all hazards, and I asked myself was I really bound by my promise to the Baron, a promise

extorted as it was by fear. But I had no leisure for casuistry, and, great as was the temptation, I resisted it.

‘It is not for myself,’ I said. ‘I have reasons—I can’t explain. I beg you only to trust me, and I entreat you, stay at least till to-morrow. If you fear for John Penrhyn’s being led into evil, remember his chief enemy is here.’

That suggestion seemed to strike him. He thought for a few seconds, and then he said, ‘Till to-morrow—it could do no harm till to-morrow.’

‘Yes, only till to-morrow,’ I exclaimed. ‘One knows not what may happen before then. And if you would but trust me!’

‘I don’t understand, dear Mrs. Anstruther. Why should I not trust you? But it will be better for me to go now. You will be calmer, quieter to-morrow. I will see you the first thing in the morning. You may be sure I will take care that you shall have some one to apply to. Pray be calm. Is there nothing else I can do for you this evening?’

I felt so excited, so indignant, so vexed and ashamed—I scarcely know what I said; and Mr. Neville shook hands heartily, wished me good evening, and went back to the Fonda de Paris.

I almost hated him. He had misunderstood me, he had failed in sympathy, he had scarcely the ordinary chivalry of a gentleman; above all, he looked down upon me—no woman can bear that thought with patience, much less with humility. I was thankful to be alone that I might give vent to my feelings without restraint. ‘Go! yes, he should go if he wished it, wherever he liked, as soon as he liked. He must manage his affairs his own way, and leave me to manage mine. Whatever might be my difficulties, I would never again humble myself to ask Mr. Neville’s assistance.’

For a time I was in a tumult of indignant annoyance, but I reasoned myself into a more Christian frame of mind before I went to bed. Mr. Neville was cold, that was undoubted; and he thought me a silly woman given up to nervous fears, that also was certain: but then he did not, and could not, know all my causes for uneasiness. And as I had hitherto managed my affairs for myself, it was natural for him to suppose that I could continue to do so, and that it was his duty to go after John Penrhyn. The one real pressing disquietude was the knowledge that he was going to Malaga on false information. If I could only have made up my mind whether I was at liberty to break my promise to that wretched Baron, I could have borne other vexations with comparative indifference, but I thought and thought, and resolved and counter-resolved, and was no nearer a decision at the end than I was at the beginning.

Very lonely was that little back room in the Fonda del Cid, very dreary it was to be without Marietta, without even the company of a fire. The Southern brightness which had made the day so charming was but a half compensation for the long evening, just chilly enough to need a shawl; and the weather seemed about to change. I had seen clouds that day, for the first time since we crossed the Sierra Guadarrama, and gusts of wind had blown about the dust in the streets. How miserable it all was! I am not likely to forget it! And in the bottom of my heart I felt that I could only comfort myself by saying, as my old nurse used to say to me, when I felt the first symptoms of a nervous headache, 'Never seem to heed it; the worst is to come.'

CHAPTER XV.

(Continuation.)

THE next day was Sunday : it brought comfort at its very commencement. I sent the Commissionnaire to the post, in the very vague hope that there might be letters for me or for Marietta.

He brought back one from Ina, written in better spirits, though she greatly bemoaned my continued absence. 'Henry Anson had arrived, and was likely to stay some days. Hearing his account of us had been delightful, and seeing him was like seeing a bit of home. They were going for a drive that afternoon, and there was some idea of a ride the next day, if Mrs. Strangways' habit would fit Ina.'

This was the beginning of the letter; the end was written after the ride, and contained what was to me an interesting piece of information.

'I must tell you, dear mamma, what Mr. Anson says about "Cousin John," and why Mr. Neville is rushing after him. I doubt whether Mr. Neville would wish me to know; but as I do know, there can be no harm in mentioning it to you. "Cousin John" is a nephew of that old Mr. Neville in the north who is so rich, so he is first cousin to our Mr. Neville. Everybody thought till lately that our Mr. Neville (Edward Neville) would be the heir; but "Cousin John" has quite supplanted him, and the old man has given out that all his money is to be left to him. Now John is going on unsatisfactorily; Mr.

Anson did not tell me how, but he said that he has been extravagant and getting into bad company, and that if the old man were to hear of it, "Cousin John" would be out of his uncle's good graces, and Mr. Neville would be in favour again, and no doubt inherit the property. Mr. Anson hopes it may be so. He says that it has been very hard upon Mr. Neville, and that everyone thinks so except Mr. Neville himself, who is bent upon bringing John back to England and keeping him out of mischief. This was all told me in profound secrecy, except that I warned Mr. Anson I never kept anything from you. I think he is pleased to have some one to talk to who can enter into things which interest him, for he is terribly out of spirits. I can't help thinking there must be something wrong between him and Marietta, because he shrinks so from mentioning her name.

'I have had a letter from grandmamma, with a budget of news about Arling. Lord Hopeton, she says, has just come of age, and there are to be great rejoicings. It seems so odd to me not even to wish to be there, but I don't. I like my quiet life here a great deal better, and now that I have begun to ride I shall be able to see a good deal of the country. We go out in large parties; but I keep just to my own friends, and make scarcely any new acquaintances.'

Very like Ina that letter is! Hers is a mind which so seeks after distractions that it is always more or less disappointing to me. But one must learn to take all characters as they are, and not expect from them that which God has not thought fit to bestow. But though I felt a little pained, I had no time then to think about it. I expected Mr. Neville every moment, and the question to be decided was, whether I should or should not tell him that if he went to Malaga he would be acting on false information. I thought over the matter again, and with a

much deeper interest—a much more kindly sympathy—than I had felt the night before. Ina's letter had thrown a new light on Mr. Neville's character. So honourable, so conscientious! He would work all the more earnestly to save John Penrhyn, because in doing so he would be saving his rival. Of course, therefore, he would think himself bound to sacrifice any ordinary claim like mine, and would steel himself against my representations in a way which could not but appear ungracious.

I was ashamed of my previous bitterness of feeling; I longed to make my confession; but Mr. Neville is not at all an approachable person. I respect him—but own a weakness, a fault to him! no, that would be impossible.

Time went on. I thought of all which might depend on Mr. Neville's finding John Penrhyn, and I blamed myself for having kept him with me for an hour. The more I considered the matter, the less I felt bound by my extorted promise; and yet my very soul recoiled from the thought of breaking it. I had never done such a thing before; I felt as if my self-respect would be gone if I should do it. And then the fear! I know that told upon me. I shuddered as I remembered that horrible expression of countenance. I was working myself back again into the agitation and weakness of the preceding evening, and in the midst of my distress Mr. Neville was announced.

'He had come,' he said, 'with a message from Miss Randolph. She was most anxious to see me. There were some new plans on foot, he could not tell what; but he had reason to think there was an idea of leaving Valencia almost immediately.'

'Then it will be for the purpose of avoiding me,' I said; 'I have suspected it ever since I found those wretched people here. Lady Chase will never let me see Mrs. Randolph.'

‘But why not?’

‘Because she knows that I am not come, like Marietta, to nurse and pet her, but that I am also resolved to bring her to some settlement of Marietta’s affairs. There can be no other cause for all this mystery.’

Mr. Neville became instantly attentive.

‘I thought Miss Randolph was quite independent of her aunt,’ he said.

‘Partly, not wholly. She has her own little fortune, but there is a sum of two thousand pounds which ought to be hers, but which has been left partially in Mrs. Randolph’s hands. One of my chief motives for undertaking this Spanish journey has been to urge Mrs. Randolph to do what is necessary in order that Marietta may have it.’

‘But she is not dishonourable,’ he exclaimed.

‘Oh no. She is only weak and ill and procrastinating; and this miserable woman who haunts her has entirely the upper hand of her.’

‘But surely if Lady Chase had any sinister intention she would not wish to keep Miss Randolph with her aunt, but would rather desire to separate them. Miss Randolph’s influence——’

‘Will never be exerted in her own favour,’ I said; ‘Marietta is a mere baby in business matters, and so wildly romantic that I have never yet ventured to tell her what I have at heart. She would refuse, I am convinced, to have the subject mentioned to Mrs. Randolph, because it would seem that she had a mercenary object in view in coming to Spain.’

Mr. Neville thought for a few moments, then he said, ‘Yes, I see, it may be so; but Miss Randolph intimated that you would see her aunt.’

‘If I do,’ I said, ‘Lady Chase will take care that I shall have no opportunity of speaking to her alone. In

fact, Mr. Neville, I have an absolute distrust of the whole party. I think, and I have good reason to think, that if Marietta should remain with her aunt they will play upon her unselfishness, and make her do precisely what they wish, and so her money and her time, everything, in fact, will be sacrificed, and no one will be able to interfere. For myself, I have nothing to do but to go back to England, and blame myself for ever having been weak enough to put this poor child into such a position.'

'It might have been wiser not to have come,' he said, gravely.

'Yes, it would have been wiser, only if I had not accompanied Marietta, she would have come alone. She was bent upon it, and I have no authority over her. There is not a single human being who really has a right to command her.'

'A dangerous position for a young lady,' said Mr. Neville, with his half-satirical smile.

I was in no mood for satire, and I said quickly, 'You would feel as I do, Mr. Neville, if you could face what it will be to leave this poor child here, in the care of such people;—in intimate association with Baron von Bronnen.'

He started, as if he had been stung. 'You don't think for an instant, Mrs. Anstruther, that I don't feel it.' He turned away from me, walked to the window, and stood there in silence for some seconds. When he came back to me he said, 'I shall not leave Valencia till I see further into this matter.'

'Thank you,' was my reply, 'thank you heartily,' and I grasped his hand. It was very cold, and I felt it tremble. He was perhaps troubled as to his decision; and was thinking of John Penrhyn. Yet that was not like him—it would be a woman's scrupulousness, not a man's. But I felt I must tell him what I knew, all the more

because he was going to do me a service. I could not let him act in the dark. I would only wait till after my interview with Marietta.

Just because we were thinking of something else, I said, 'I have heard from Ina. Mr. Anson is at Pau, and in bad spirits. Ina thinks there must have been something uncomfortable between him and Marietta.'

It did not do; he would not follow up the subject, but merely said, 'Oh! he had supposed Henry Anson was in England by this time.' And then he asked if he should come for me at twelve, and go with me to the Fonda de Paris. It was the hour Marietta had named; this was agreed upon, and we separated.

At twelve we went to the Fonda. Mr. Neville wished to leave me to see Marietta alone, but I insisted upon his going upstairs with me. We were shown into a kind of *salon*—the bed-recesses being shut in by glass doors;—whose room it was I did not know. I suppose we waited full half an hour before Marietta came. She was not prepared to see Mr. Neville; her face flushed, and she was embarrassed. They scarcely spoke to each other, and Marietta asked no explanation as to why he was here and not at Cordova. I suppose he had told his tale when he saw her in the morning. She seemed wholly taken up with me; and when I found that everything seemed to be going on naturally, without mystery or effort, I thought Mr. Neville would be better away, and told him so plainly; and he professed himself quite willing to go, as he had to telegraph for his luggage, the greater part of which had been sent by Diligence from Madrid to Cordova, and was no doubt quietly reposing at the latter place. 'Whether he should ever see it again was a matter of doubt. Spain was the last country in the world in which it was wise to part company with one's luggage.'

'It is very vexatious,' said Marietta.

‘No, not vexatious, Miss Randolph, only unfortunate. Mrs. Anstruther, I shall call for you again—when?’

‘In half an hour—three quarters of an hour—an hour—Marietta, what do you say?’

‘An hour, if you please,’ was Marietta’s decided reply; and she stood up and waited till Mr. Neville was out of the room, and then gave me a regular Italian greeting.

Seeing her again was like a refreshing breeze; I scarcely knew before how dreary and anxious I had been. We talked over the last evening’s misadventure, if I may so call it, and Marietta persisted it was all a blunder. Lady Chase had been as distressed as I was, and would have gone herself to explain matters to me, only it was so very late; and then they knew I had Mr. Neville with me.

‘But he was very near leaving me,’ I said. ‘He had made up his mind to start for Malaga.’

Marietta did not speak instantly, and, in the momentary pause, I felt nearly sure that I heard a rustling, as if some one was moving behind the closed glass doors. I looked round. Marietta said carelessly, ‘Those men are in and out of the room as they choose; you know there is another door, and they need not come in here; but it is immensely awkward, and my poor aunt says she really can’t bear it any longer, and she proposes going to Malaga. We shall have things more comfortable there. That was what I wished to talk to you about. She thought if you could go with us, then perhaps you might get back to England by the Peninsular and Oriental steamer.’

‘But Ina,’ I said.

‘Ah, yes! how stupid! But people are always going back from Pau. Surely she would find an escort.’

‘I must return to Pau,’ I said; ‘I long for it. I must see that all is done as I wished.’ I know my voice changed, and Marietta’s quick sympathy was instantly awakened.

‘ Ah !’ she said, ‘ you must not think I forget, but it is so strange to be here. It makes other things a hundred years gone by. I would not be selfish, only I long to have you, to keep you.’

‘ I could not be with you much, dear child !’ I said. ‘ I can’t tolerate Lady Chase, though you can.’

‘ But you don’t think,’ she exclaimed, ‘ that Lady Chase is going to stay with us ? Oh no ! She goes back to Paris immediately.’

‘ And the Baron ?’

‘ To the moon, for aught I know. Certainly he does not go with us.’

‘ But what brought him here ?’

‘ Kindness. They really are kind. I can’t help seeing that. Lady Chase nurses my poor aunt like a sister.’

‘ And Mrs. Randolph requires such nursing ?’ I said.

‘ Oh yes, she is so changed, so ill, she can do so very little. But it is owing to a cold she caught in Madrid, and she feels certain she shall get better at Malaga ; and then when the summer comes we shall go back to England.’

‘ We !’ I repeated. ‘ Then it is all settled, Marietta, and you leave me !’

She broke down then. The calmness and cheerfulness had been assumed. It was a bitter prospect, but she felt it to be right, and was nerving herself for it, and buoying herself up with the thought that the summer would bring her to England, and the old relations would be resumed.

We talked a long time, and I saw more and more plainly how independent Marietta’s course was likely to be ; how little, even if she had remained with me, I could have been able to direct it. Her strong feeling had hidden a good deal from me, and I had reckoned upon her love for Ina as an influence greater than it really was. It was romance—but Marietta’s heart requires more than

romance ; and Ina is her inferior both in mind and talent. As we went on, the way seemed to open—clear, but desolate for us both—Marietta had no doubt as to her duty ; I had none as to mine, only I was not quite certain as to whether it would or would not be wise to go to Malaga. That required a little thought. I asked if I might see Mrs. Randolph ?

‘ Yes, certainly, as soon as she is equal to it,’ was Marietta’s reply.

‘ But is she not equal to it now ? ’

‘ I think not just this morning, she has had such a bad night, and Lady Chase begged so hard that I would keep her quiet.’

The old misgivings awoke. ‘ If Mrs. Randolph could get over the first meeting,’ I said, ‘ she would not be upset again.’

‘ Oh no ! and I have told her that she must see you, and she is really anxious to do it. She knows how very, very kind you have been to me.’

‘ I don’t want to be thanked,’ I answered, coldly.

Marietta laughed as she said, caressingly, ‘ So very proud ! But if others thank you, I never shall. There are some things far beyond thanks,’ she added in an undertone.

I returned to the subject of Mrs. Randolph. I asked again if it was quite certain I should see her if I called later—at five o’clock—six—seven : I would come at any hour.

Marietta was perfectly simple and true in her answer : she was quite certain I might see her, but she must first consult Lady Chase.

‘ My dear child,’ I said at last, ‘ when are you going to cut Lady Chase, and act on your own responsibility ? ’

‘ When I quite understand what my responsibility involves,’ was Marietta’s answer ; and I had nothing more to say.

Mr. Neville came for me ; that is to say, he sent up word that he was waiting for me, and I went back with him to the Fonda del Cid.

On our way we walked a little about the town, and went into the Iglesia de la Congregacion, where we heard part of a sermon, of which I could just make out that it was upon the necessity of faith. Then to another church, the Santos Juanes. Both churches were well filled. Outside, in the market-place, there was a crowd, buying and selling. It was all very strange, very unlike Sunday, and the isolated feeling was most dispiriting. Mr. Neville again volunteered remaining at Valencia, till I had finally determined by which route I would return. He hoped he might be able to take care of me. As to John Penrhyn, if he was at Malaga, he said, he should meet him there ; if not, there was little doubt that he would have sailed for England. At any rate, half his anxiety was over, now that he knew him to be no longer in Baron von Bronnen's neighbourhood. I was most thankful, and yet I felt myself a traitor. He said this just as we were at the cathedral, and about to mount the steps of the tower. A French gentleman joined us there, and I had no opportunity of saying anything in reply. The view from the top was striking, extending over the far-famed *Huerta* of Valencia, a rich plain covered with houses, orchards, and gardens ; the Mediterranean bounding it to the south and east, and a chain of rocky hills to the north and west. It made me think of the Val d'Arno ; but Florence is far more picturesque than Valencia, though people do talk of the Moorish domes of the latter. But I wonder that I retain any impression of the view, for all the time I was looking at it I was thinking of the communication which I was to make to Mr. Neville, and its possible consequences. But still there was a delay. The French gentleman walked with us to 'The Cid,' and then Mr. Neville and he

went off in another direction ; Mr. Neville promising, however, to return again shortly.

So there was a respite, but about five o'clock he came back, and by that time I had received a note from Marietta, saying that it was quite decided they should leave for Malaga the next day, if the steamer which was expected came in early. Perhaps Lady Chase would go with them, as she talked of returning to England immediately, but at any rate the Baron would remain behind at Valencia. She earnestly begged that I would think over the matter, and make up my mind to accompany them.

I put the note into Mr. Neville's hands. His remark was, 'Just the very best arrangement. It will cut the Gordian knot for us all.'

'Not for you,' I said. 'John Penryhn is at Barcelona.' As I spoke the words I felt as if I had committed a sin ; and yet I was relieved. At any rate, there was no drawing back.

Mr. Neville looked at me, not half comprehending me. Then came the natural question, 'how I knew it?'

I related my interview with the Baron ; and as I told it, I could see Mr. Neville's face grow dark with some feeling, whether of indignation or annoyance I could not tell.

When I finished, he said, in a tone of cold but intense irritation, 'If I had only been told this before ! It is immensely provoking. I can't see what is to be done.'

He had not a word or thought for my terror, or for my conscience.

'Perhaps I ought to have spoken before,' I said ; 'but I felt myself bound ——'

'To let that ruffian tell a lie before your face without contradicting him. I don't understand such scruples.'

But, forgive me, Mrs. Anstruther, I daresay you were frightened.'

'Yes,' I said, 'I was frightened;' but more than that, I had a scruple. You may not understand it, but I had it, and I have it still. I am not at all sure that I have done right. And besides, Mr. Neville, suppose I had told you, what could you have done which you have not done?'

'I could have set off for Barcelona last night by the Diligence.'

'And left me to the vengeance of Baron von Bronnen. I don't think you would have done that.'

He made no answer, but his brow relaxed a little. He sat down, leaning his head upon his hand, and thinking. I was determined not to speak again till he did, for he was just in that mood in which he would be certain to take up anything I said perversely: so I seated myself also, and turned over the pages of the guide-book.

Presently he looked up and said, 'You go to Malaga to-morrow?'

'I think so. I have nearly resolved.'

'Perhaps you will be able quite to resolve. It is impossible to act upon uncertainties.'

'Well,' I replied, hesitatingly; 'I think—I confess I see no alternative.'

'There is none,' he replied, 'I shall see you off, and then ——'

'You will go yourself to Barcelona. I am very sorry.'

'So am I.' He stood up to go, but waited, and I was sure that he felt he ought to make an apology for his petulance, but I would not help him. I only stood as he did, and looked at him.

He was going to say good-bye coldly; but—I don't know how it was—I suppose we were neither of us really angry with each other—his fingers no sooner touched mine than

a cloud seemed to pass away from his face, and grasping my hand, he exclaimed, 'Don't be hard upon me, Mrs. Anstruther. There are times when the burden of life seems too much for one, but it will be right enough by-and-by.

I did not understand, but of course I responded in his own tone, and he departed.

CHAPTER XVI.

(Continuation.)

THERE is no need to relate all the worry of my mind that evening, when I felt that I was again left to myself to manage an interview with Mrs. Randolph as I could, in spite of Lady Chase, and to make all my plans fit in with the necessity of bringing back Ina from Pau; to say nothing of the choice between the solitary return journey through the centre of Spain, or else the wretched voyage, which I dreaded nearly as much. It seemed almost cruel of Mr. Neville to leave me, to pursue this wild search after John Penrhyn, knowing that he would, in all probability, be of no possible use to him. But it was no good to think, or to regret; I had acted for the best, and when I undertook to go with Marietta to Spain I was aware there would be difficulties, only I had not expected them to come precisely in this form. There was, however, one comfort; as long as I was in the same town with Baron von Bronnen, Mr. Neville would be there also, and when I was gone, I need not trouble myself about the Baron's revenge.

So I rose the next morning happier and braver, and Mr. Neville came early, and was full of kind thoughts and encouragements. We did not refer to anything that had passed, but I could not help seeing that he was anxious to make up for anything which might have annoyed me: and, speaking generally, that is the utmost one can expect from a man in the way of acknowledgment of anything amiss; and I have learnt to be satisfied with it.

I had sent word to Marietta the evening before that I would agree to go to Malaga; and had begged her to let me know, as soon as she could, at what hour the steamer would sail, and how we were to meet. Mr. Neville had just been to the office, and heard that the *Tajo* was in port, and would leave for Malaga that afternoon, at half-past three; the *Ebro* and the *Catalan* also were in, and would leave for Barcelona at two.

I thought he would not be able to see us off; but he said he should travel by the Diligence at night; it would take more time, but in some respects it would be better, he should be able to keep a longer watch upon the Baron's movements; and, at any rate, he certainly should not leave us behind him in Valencia. At ten o'clock came a note from Lady Chase, written for Mrs. Randolph, and telling me when and how we were to meet. I was to be on the quay at three o'clock precisely. It was thought better that I should not go to the Fonda, because it was so important that Mrs. Randolph should be kept quiet. I did not myself see why it would be more disturbing to her to meet me at the hotel, than on board the vessel, but I could do nothing but agree. Mr. Neville asked me what arrangement I should make about Ina, and all I could answer was that really I did not know. I must try to find an escort for her from Pau. At the present moment I could think only of Marietta, and I should not be satisfied to leave her until I had put her under the care of some person who might be able to protect her in case she needed it.

'Thank you!' he exclaimed; and then he turned away, as if ashamed, and, for the first time, the thought flashed upon me—he loves her.

It was a revelation; but as I recalled all that had passed I marvelled that I had not seen the truth before. Once it had crossed my mind that Marietta cared for him; it

He did not know, he would go and enquire. (Waiters never do know anything which one wishes them to know.)

I stopped him. 'It is two,' I said. 'I am sure of it. We have just——'

'*Un petit quart d'heure*,' observed the man, taking out his watch.

'It is despair,' said Mr. Neville. 'They have the start of us completely.'

'They will have if we don't make the effort.' I did not wait for any more information, but hurried down the stairs. Mr. Neville by this time had recovered himself.

'What about your luggage?' he asked.

'We will think as we drive to the quay, only let us find out the truth.' And as we rattled through the streets, we hastily digested our plans, proposing first one, then another, ending with the decision that if the *Ebro* were still in port, Mr. Neville should go on board and leave me to follow as I might—possibly by the *Catalan*, possibly by the *Diligence*. I felt sure I should be able to manage something. The one important point was not to let them escape from Mr. Neville. Then another idea suggested itself. Perhaps we had been hasty. Perhaps, after all, the waiter had blundered, and it was only Lady Chase who was gone. Marietta and Mrs. Randolph might be in the Fonda at that moment. We both laughed at the notion—it was a relief; but the laugh was not hearty. We reached the quay; a motley crowd had gathered there. They were watching the *Ebro*, as it steamed away from the shore. The *Catalan* was evidently preparing to follow.

We looked at each other; neither of us spoke for a few seconds. I confess my mind was a blank. Mr. Neville looked pale, but he was now quite cool and collected. It was better, he said, that he should go on board the *Catalan* instantly. He would leave all arrangements for

his luggage to me. I should do well to drive back to the Fonda de Paris, make quite sure that Mrs. Randolph really was not there; and then, if I found it was as we feared, I might go back to 'The Cid,' settle everything, and come down again to the quay. It was possible, just possible, that I might be in time to join him on board the *Catalan*; if not I must take the long land journey by Diligence.

We grasped each other's hands and parted, Mr. Neville calling out, as he jumped into the boat which was to take him to the vessel, 'The Cuatro Naciones' is my hotel.

I don't think I felt frightened or nervous or lonely then. I prayed to be helped, and a Higher Power than my own kept me up.

Yet the drive seemed very long, and every minute was so precious! At the Fonda de Paris I could find only a Spanish waiter, and I could not make him understand me: but an English stranger came up and helped me, and explained what I wanted. The people made a fuss, and asserted again that Mrs. Randolph was gone, and could not comprehend why I doubted it. But I succeeded at last in persuading them to let me go upstairs to her room. And certainly it was as they had said, empty. A half-written note was on the table, it was in Marietta's handwriting, and began, 'My dearest friend, we start at——' That was all. I put it in my bag. I then went to Mr. Neville's rooms, took possession of his luggage, and drove off to the Fonda del Cid. There, happily, everything was ready for my departure. My boxes had been brought down into the entrance hall, and I had only to pay my bill. Still a good deal of time had elapsed. I did not think it possible that I could get back to the *Catalan* before it started; and then my nervousness and fright began. I shall never forget the suspense I felt as we drove again through those noisy ill-paved streets, my

head aching, my brain dizzy, and the jolting *tartana* stumbling along at a pace which it seemed impossible to quicken. I nearly fell in my eagerness to leave the vehicle, and, forgetting luggage, payment, everything, I rushed to the edge of the quay to look for the *Catalan*. Yes, there she was still, but getting up her steam, upon the very point of departure. Men crowded round me, offering me a boat, begging to take my luggage; the driver was exorbitant in his charge. They all did with me very much as they pleased. I paid the man some enormous sum—I have not been able since to make out how much. I seated myself in the worst boat, gave *pesetas* indiscriminately to the porters; and in return was assured that there was not a doubt I should be quite in time.

And I was in time. I say from the very bottom of my heart, 'Thank God!' Mr. Neville handed me on board; and I believe then I was very foolish, and very much inclined to faint. But I did not faint, it is not my custom. I took some brandy instead, and got much better, and then Mr. Neville sat down by me, and we talked.

I daresay it might have been better to rest, but I really could not rest till I had said out all my fears, and heard all his.

I don't know how it was, we seemed to understand each other without explanation; at least, I am sure he felt that I understood him. He said nothing about his feeling for Marietta, but it was implied; he did not try to conceal it, and I spoke as taking it for granted. I showed him the beginning of the note, and we agreed that she must have wished to let me know the change of plans, but had been prevented. There was not a shadow of doubt that she had been herself deceived, and the motive for

the deception it was not very difficult to divine. Lady Chase and the Baron were resolved at all risks to keep me from Mrs. Randolph.

‘Let them once have got the start by putting you on a wrong scent,’ said Mr. Neville, ‘and they would have managed matters without difficulty. They intend, I do not doubt, to take Mrs. Randolph to Cannes, or Nice, or some place of that kind, quite out of your beat.’

Yes, without doubt such would have been their intention, but it must have been a difficult game to play, with Marietta as a necessary accomplice. That was the puzzle, and I could not solve it, neither could Mr. Neville, and the more we talked, the more perplexed we were.

We sat on deck till it was dark. I was sufficiently at ease then to enjoy the view of the coast, and the range of mountains behind the Huerta of Valencia, looking purple and golden in the sunset. There were a good many people on board, all men, with the exception of a French lady; and a dinner was prepared for us all in the *salon*, about five o’clock; but by that time it was cold, and rough, and stormy, and I felt that it would be better to retire to the cabin for the night. The unhappy Frenchwoman was miserable and frightened, and begged to be allowed to stay with her husband in the *salon*. She was a very unfortunate traveller, and hated Spain with a most cordial hatred. She had lately been in the south, in Granada. Mr. Neville told her that he had intended going there himself, but had been prevented. ‘Ah!’ she exclaimed, ‘you ought to go down on your knees, and thank God every day for a fortnight that you have been delivered from going to such a country.’

In what the horrors consisted she did not state, and as the evening drew on, she had little consciousness of anything but present fear and misery.

I lay in my berth, listening to her lamentations in the adjoining *salon*, and trying, when I was not wretchedly ill, to sleep. It was really a miserable night; we had only a *garçon* to wait upon us, and the arrangements were, as they are in all Spanish matters, entirely behind the world, and as uncomfortable as possible.

We landed at about eleven o'clock the next morning—Tuesday. A crowd of boats came round the vessel to take us on shore, and there was a great deal of rushing, pushing, and squabbling, and consequent delay. The *Ebro* had arrived about an hour before us, and I was very much afraid that our friends, or enemies—I don't know which to call them—might have gone on still farther immediately, but Mr. Neville was certain this could not be the case. Mrs. Randolph would assuredly require rest, and they would reckon that they had a whole day before them, since on the supposition that we had missed the *Catalan*, which they evidently took it for granted we should, it would have required at least forty hours to reach Barcelona from Valencia by Diligence. I tried to believe it all, but my heart beat very quickly, as we drove by the broad terrace, or rampart, the Muralla del Mar, which is the fashionable promenade of Barcelona, and turned into the Rambla, a great street, planted with trees, like the Boulevards of Paris, but wider and handsomer. Here was the Fonda de las Cuatro Naciones. Even in that short drive, I had felt somewhat cheered. The place was so very civilised and French. I felt more in the neighbourhood of friends than I had done since I left Pau.

Mr. Neville had left the carriage, and was inquiring about rooms, and I was watching with anxious eyes every one who passed up and down, when a gentlemanly young Englishman turned into the hotel, when I recognised John Penrhyn. I jumped out of the carriage, stopped him,

shook him heartily by the hand, said I know not what, expressive of the highest satisfaction, and was sobered by the grave face of Mr. Neville, who turned round on hearing my voice, and after finishing his conversation with the landlord, and giving the necessary orders, came up to John quite coolly, put his hand upon his shoulder, and said—

‘ Well, John, found at last ! ’

The young man drew back, looked confused, and stammered. I should have done the same, if I had had that stern eye fixed upon me.

‘ We can have rooms,’ said Mr. Neville to me.

‘ And they—are they arrived? are they here?’ I asked.

‘ John will know,’ said Mr. Neville. ‘ You are expecting Lady Chase and Baron von Bronnen, John. Where are they?’

‘ I am expecting no one,’ was the proud answer; ‘ I am here by myself.’

Mr. Neville looked angry, and I interposed. ‘ If you know where they are,’ I said, ‘ you will do us the greatest possible favour if you will tell us.’

‘ I do know where Lady Chase is—in this hotel, with Mrs. Randolph and her niece. But I did not expect her or anyone. I have not seen Baron von Bronnen, and I do not choose to have assertions made about me which are untrue.’

Mr. Neville took no notice of this remark: he merely said to me, ‘ If you will go to your room and rest, I will do all that is necessary, and come to you. John, you and I have a good deal to say to each other. Where shall I find you?’

‘ Here.’

‘ And at what hour shall you be at leisure?’

‘ At whatever hour you choose.’

‘Very well. We shall meet at the *table d’hôte*, and I will see you afterwards.’

John assented by silence.

I could not dispute the wisdom of this arrangement, though what I craved was at once to go to Marietta myself, and have an explanation of all that had happened, and hurry her back to the shelter of my protection. But Mr. Neville gave me no option. He had evidently quite decided what he should do, and he did not leave me a choice. John Penrhyn asked if he could do anything for me; but I saw that he was anxious to be off, and I said I was tired and wished to be left alone. So I was taken upstairs and installed in a comfortable room, furnished in the French style, and looking out upon the Rambla.

Mr. Neville was full of consideration for me, but his face was clouded. The sight of John Penrhyn had aroused some very painful thoughts. He told me that he should without delay see Lady Chase, and demand an explanation. If I would give him the commission, he would also insist upon an interview with Marietta. By this time she would have discovered the true character of the people she was with, and she would, no doubt, at once place herself under my protection. Lady Chase I was quite willing he should see. She required to be confronted with a man; but Marietta I was doubtful about. If, as I felt sure must be the case, she was frightened and unhappy, she must be longing for me, and it would seem unkind in me not to go to her. But I yielded. Mr. Neville is just one of those men who has very little of a woman in him, and I think he doubted my discretion. Anyhow, he was resolved to manage it all himself; and so, after ordering me a basin of soup and a glass of wine, he went off on his errand.

He came back to me in an hour’s time. His story was most wonderful. Lady Chase and Marietta had

received him in the kindest, pleasantest way ; they had expected him ; they were delighted to see him, and charmed to hear I was arrived. Of course they supposed I should come by the *Catalan*, if I was too late for the *Ebro*. It had made them a little anxious, but now everything was right.

Mr. Neville explained how entirely we had been deceived, and Marietta was greatly distressed. She had written to me on the Sunday night, quite late, to say that some Spanish friends of Lady Chase had been so strongly recommending Barcelona instead of Malaga, that their plans were quite altered ; and, as the Barcelona steamer was to sail on the same day as that for Malaga, it was only a question with me of taking a different route. She hoped I should not object to go with them. Silence was to be interpreted as acquiescence. She also said that she had despatched another note, the first thing in the morning, to which she had expected an answer, but not receiving any she had taken it for granted that all was settled, and that I should meet them on the quay, in time to start by the *Ebro*. Not finding me there, she was very uneasy ; but as the *Catalan* was to sail almost at the same time, she comforted herself by the thought that I should follow in it, and that Mr. Neville would be with me to take care of me. It had all happened just as she expected, and now everything was delightful.

‘ But you told her,’ I said, ‘ that I never received either of the notes.’

‘ Oh yes ! I told her :’ and she turned in astonishment to Lady Chase, who immediately exclaimed, ‘ Those Spaniards ! they are never to be trusted. I gave such special orders.’

‘ Those English and Germans, rather,’ I said. ‘ One has no defence against falsehood ; and this story, as far as Lady Chase is concerned, is false.’

‘ It is a lie, an abominable lie !’ exclaimed Mr. Neville. ‘ And would you believe it ?—when I reminded her

that she had sent to tell you to be at the quay at three o'clock, too late for the *Ebro*, she said it must have been a mistake, she wrote so hurriedly !'

'And what is to be done now ?'

'Stay and watch,' he said, gloomily.

'But I cannot stay. I must go.'

'Go ! no, never,' he exclaimed ; 'you cannot.'

'But, if I must—if I have other duties ? And it is Marietta's own doing. Poor child ! she has walked into the snare, and she will not see that she is in it.'

He sat down, considering, I could see, anxiously. I had an impulse to speak—then I feared—then I thought again ; at last I said, 'She is very unprotected.'

He looked up at me and answered very slowly, and in a voice which seemed choked with some inward burst of feeling, 'Mrs. Anstruther, don't tempt me. It may be her misery and mine.'

'Misery !—if you love each other ?' I replied.

'But does she love me ? Can she have thought of me ? And, if she could love me—my dear friend'—he grasped my hand convulsively—'I have nothing to offer her. I am all but penniless.'

And then the tears gathered in his eyes, and as the large drops rolled down his cheeks, the strong, brave-hearted, noble-minded man hid his face from me, and I stood by him, feeling—as a woman must feel when she sees a man in sorrow—an intense reverential pity.

'You mean,' I said, after a pause, 'that you have no present income which would support a wife ; but you do not mean that you have no prospects.'

'I mean,' he answered, 'that I thought once I should inherit a fortune, but that is gone by. I have only a mere trifle of my own, besides my college fellowship, which must cease when I marry, and the hope of what I may eventually make at the Indian Bar.'

I was silent.

‘You see,’ he said, looking at me anxiously, ‘it would not be fair, it would not do. We might be engaged, if—but it is folly talking of it; even now I believe she cares for Henry Anson.’

‘No, no,’ I exclaimed, ‘I assure you I have not the slightest doubt she is wholly indifferent to him.’

‘And you think—have you any idea?—is it possible there might be a chance for me?’

I knew I should chill him by my answer, but I was compelled to be cautious. ‘She has given me no reason to form any opinion about it, but I feel quite sure that she cares for no one else.’

‘It would not be fair,’ he again repeated, ‘it would be such a long engagement. I must leave her, and make my way before we could marry.’

‘She has a little money of her own,’ I replied.

‘Don’t tempt me, I entreat you, don’t tempt me!’ He started from his seat, and walked rapidly up and down the room.

It was the first time in my life that I had ever done or said anything definitely to further a marriage, and I shrank from the fearful responsibility, but I had a conviction that I was right, and I said, after a few moments’ consideration,—

‘Mr. Neville, there are some cases in which seeming imprudence is real prudence. I believe this is one. Marietta is to me as my own child, and I tell you truly that, taking you as you are, with scarcely any present means, and with nothing to look to except your own exertions and her small income, I would, if it were in my power, give her to you, not only without hesitation, but with thankfulness.’

He took my hand, but he could not speak, and he left me.

CHAPTER XVII.

Barcelona, Fonda de las Cuatro Naciones : December 24.

—Little did I imagine that I should ever spend a Christmas eve in Barcelona. I feel now as if I should be prepared for spending the next at the Antipodes. It is all very strange, but the day brings many grateful thoughts, and a portion of the weight is off my mind. Mr. Neville has not ventured yet to speak to Marietta, but he is making his way ; and I believe he will succeed. I do not repent what I have done, though I feel every hour more and more its importance.

I have seen Mrs. Randolph. Lady Chase has changed her tactics, and now interposes no obstacles ; but that she is still a snake in the grass I do not for an instant doubt. Marietta came to me soon after Mr. Neville left me on Monday, and told me precisely what she had told him. The idea that there was any intention to deceive us seemed to her preposterous. She asked again and again what could be the motive. I really did not dare to suggest that it might be the desire to get hold of her apart from me, and prevent my interfering about the money. If I had done so, Marietta would have thought me worse than absurd ; it would have seemed to her a mean idea suggested by a mean mind. So I left it. I went to Mrs. Randolph for half an hour in the evening. Marietta was present the whole time. Mrs. Randolph looks, and is, very ill, but I believe she may linger for months, perhaps even for another year. She was as picturesquely ‘got up’ as

ever, and would have made a lovely picture for an artist. She thanked me warmly for bringing Marietta to her, and said what a delight it was to have her with her again. She had been very lonely lately.

I asked if Lady Chase was likely to remain with her, and if she herself intended to remain at Barcelona.

‘Indeed, I do not know,’ was the answer; ‘I go on from day to day, doing just what I am told. And now my dear child is with me, I care little where I am.’

Marietta looked grieved, but I could not help remembering that the ‘dear child’ would have been with her for the last two years, only she preferred the society of that wretched Lady Chase. And yet she was not insincere at the moment—that is the strange thing about her: she really says what she means at the time, but then she means twenty different things in the course of the day. We talked upon indifferent subjects, and I brought forward the strange mistake (this is the only term I am permitted to use) which had nearly separated us. Mrs. Randolph took it very lightly, rather as a matter of interest than as involving any disquietude on my part, and Marietta said to me afterwards, apologetically, that very little had been said to her about it; Lady Chase thought it so important to keep her mind quiet.

I asked when I might see Mrs. Randolph again, and was told, ‘Oh, any day, every day if she were well enough.’ And so for this any day or every day I must wait; unless—oh, if Mr. Neville could but bring his own affairs to a crisis! If Marietta would but accept him! It is impossible for me to stay long here, and I pine—no words can say how deeply—for home and my little ones. John Penrhyn went this morning: Mr. Neville sent him off. He came to see me for an hour last evening, and we had a singularly confidential talk. I think he takes to me—as people say—and I think too that Mr. Neville has

been rather stern with him. He would be likely to be that. He has such a strong iron nature himself, he would have no sympathy for any admixture of weakness. And after all, from John's own account, the sin has not been very great. He met with Mrs. Randolph at Paris, and, from the old family connection, was a good deal with her. She was better then, and had some agreeable people at her house. At Biarritz they met again, and the Baron, who, I suppose, went there after we had seen him at Eaux-Chaudes, made his appearance. John knew nothing about him then, except that he was Lady Chase's half-brother, and that they were both intimate with Mrs. Randolph; so it seemed all right. By degrees he was led into playing cards—not gambling at first, but it became gambling. Things went on in the usual way, sometimes he lost, sometimes he won. Then John confesses that he was weak, and that although he felt himself entangled, he did not break off from the party at once, but consented to join himself with them, and go on with them to Madrid. He had always meant to go to Spain, and so it seemed to him that there was no reason against it.

I asked if he had been recalled to England then, and he said, 'No; he received no English letters till he reached Madrid. Then his uncle wrote very sternly, saying, that he heard he was leading a disreputable life, and that if he did not return instantly, the consequences might be far graver than he anticipated.'

'I knew well enough what that meant,' said John;—'that I should not be his heir; and I was not going to be brow-beaten. I had done nothing disreputable, though I had lost a few pounds at cards, and I determined to show that I cared nothing for his paltry money. So I wrote back saying that the reports were false, and that I was going home by the south of Spain.'

'But you did not go to the south,' I said.

‘No’—and he blushed a little, ‘I was a fool there. That scoundrel Von Bronnen took me in, and persuaded me to go to Valencia instead.’

‘Because he was going there?’

‘Well, yes, partly. I was in his debt then fifty pounds, and I thought I might win it back. Don’t be shocked. I was a fool, worse than a fool.’

‘Yes,’ I said, ‘you were: but what made you leave Valencia?’

‘The Baron told me that Neville was on my track. Lady Chase found that out—at least she saw him in Madrid—and I knew well enough what he would be after, and I did not choose to be taken and carried back by him to England in disgrace. So I bolted, and meant to make my way home by myself, and tell my own tale.’

‘But why have you remained here?’

‘Simply because Von Bronnen has been promising every day to write and make some arrangement about the payment of the money; and till that was settled I could not go.’

‘And he knows that you expect to be your uncle’s heir?’

‘Oh yes, he knows that; but he can’t expect anything from it.’

‘Only that it may make you a more valuable prey,’ I said. ‘He is a sharper, nothing more or less; and if you have escaped from him by paying fifty pounds, you may consider yourself a very fortunate fellow.’

‘So Neville says. I wish he was not what he is.’

‘Who? Mr. Neville?’

‘Yes; he aggravates me. I have behaved like a wretch, I know; but his coming after me maddens me. I ought to be grateful, and I am not.’

‘It is against his own interest,’ I said.

‘Don’t talk of it,’ he exclaimed; ‘it rings in my ears night and day. I would give worlds never to have come.

in his way. He is the most noble, disinterested, generous fellow ;—I ought to worship him, but he maddens me.'

I tried to bring him to explain more clearly what he meant, but I could only gather that there is between them that kind of magnetic antagonism which can scarcely be accounted for rationally. Mr. Neville's rigid, and seemingly cold, uprightness of character, and John's impulsiveness, warmth—and it must, I suppose, be confessed, his moral weakness—cannot accord. And yet I feel convinced that, place John Penrhyn in a position of real trial, and he would come out nobly. He wants experience of his own infirmity of purpose, and a sufficient motive to lead him to struggle against it—the discipline of life, in fact. This would make him seek for the true aid. Religious feeling he already possesses, but it has not yet become religious principle : and so he makes me think of jelly—made of excellent materials, and put into a good mould, but still requiring something to render it firm and eatable.

Personally, he is most attractive to me. He is not regularly handsome, but his face is decidedly clever, the expression remarkably sweet, and his smile is fascinating. Then he has the charm of a perfectly easy, frank, yet very polished manner. He is extremely amusing, for he has a keen sense of the ludicrous, and is a capital, though really a very good-natured, mimic. I hear he sings well, and I know he sketches well. In fact, he is just the young man to be spoilt by society, and the flattery he will receive as the heir to a good fortune.

We said good-bye with a very cordially expressed hope, on his part, that we might meet again. I reciprocated it, but with a mental reservation. Mr. Neville was greatly rejoiced when he saw him fairly off. It seemed hard to me not to be going with him—and, indeed, I had thought

whether it would be possible ; but I must see matters a little more advanced before I leave Marietta. My present idea is to stay a week or ten days longer here, and then to make my way to Paris, where Ina will, I hope, meet me. If she can find no friend for an escort, I shall beg Mrs. Strangways to put her under the charge of a confidential servant.

I insisted upon taking Marietta out a little to-day. Mr. Neville went with us. We lionised the cathedral, which has been a good deal spoilt, and went to the top of the tower. The view was regularly Spanish, over a cultivated plain, bounded by dreary hills, about seven hundred feet high, and washed by the Mediterranean. Barcelona itself is a very gay, bright town, entirely French. The people pique themselves upon their civilisation. The man who went to the top of the cathedral with us took especial pains to impress upon us that the Barcelonese had quite lost their taste for bull-fights. Here we have been able to buy photographs and stereoscopes, but they are all French. In fact, since I have been in Spain I have seen nothing particularly Spanish, except the fans. I tried, when we were in Madrid, to find a few things which might serve for presents at home, but really there was nothing worth having. I did buy a little work-box, but it is so roughly and badly made, that I suspect it will come to pieces before I reach home. And it is the same with regard to books. There seems to be no Spanish literature, except 'Don Quixote,' which one does see occasionally, otherwise the booksellers' shops are crowded with French novels. I have remarked but one Spanish book advertised, —a history of the late Italian war ; and that was placarded in large letters at the corners of the streets, both in Madrid and Valencia, as if the appearance of a new book was quite an event.

The Rambla is a fine street, on the outskirts of the town, and the walk by the sea—the Muralla del Mar—is

delicious. But we are not seeing Barcelona in its ordinary guise, for at this festival time the people are bent on doing nothing, and there is scarcely anyone to attend to the shops. We did, however, see some sign of business at the Audiencia—a kind of court of justice—for there the notaries were writing at their desks in an open corridor, surrounding a courtyard, and men were walking up and down, and talking to one another in a fresh free way which made one sigh with envy when one thought of a London lawyer's chambers. I was less interested, however, in the sight-seeing than in the course of true love. Mr. Neville is terribly nervous, and when he is nervous he is stiff; and Marietta was not her natural gay self. I left them as much as I possibly could together, making every excuse to walk and talk with the persons who showed us what there was to be seen; and I hope Mr. Neville made some use of his opportunities; but I saw no result, except that when we met at the *table d'hôte*, he ate nothing, and was very silent and stupid.

Barcelona: Christmas Day, Thursday.—Totally unlike Christmas Day. There was service at the consul's house, but no celebration of the Holy Communion. Mrs. Randolph was not so well, and Marietta would not leave her, and I was not allowed to see her. Mr. Neville went out with me in the afternoon, and we wandered all over the town and into the public gardens, returning by the Calle de Fernando, the business street, and the Muralla del Mar. I have more and more the impression that Barcelona is entirely a French town. We went again to the cathedral. The most charming thing to me about it is the beautiful Gothic cloister, with its faded frescoes and court of orange trees. We dined at the *table d'hôte*, ate an apology for English plum-pudding, and made acquaintance with some pleasant English people—a Mr. and Miss Baker—who are intending to stay at Barcelona

another ten days, and then go straight to Paris. If I could accompany them it would be just what I should wish. I made Mr. Neville come to my room after dinner to talk over the plan. He is sadly discouraged by Marietta's manner, and says she is so reserved to him. I think too the old scruples linger. He dreads asking her to share his poverty. I have told him that I cannot remain longer than the time I have named, and that I must try and see the consul, and find out through him some English person living in Barcelona to whom I may introduce Marietta, and who may be in some way a protection to her. Lady Chase still talks of going, but I have no faith in her words. What is become of the Baron I cannot say. Marietta knows nothing about him. At all events, before I leave, I must and will see Mrs. Randolph alone, and discuss with her the question of Marietta's money.

Friday, 26.—Mrs. Randolph better, and Marietta able to walk out with us. She promises, if possible, to go with us to-morrow to Montserrat. Lady Chase professes to be delighted to take care of her dear friend during Marietta's absence. I have written to Mrs. Strangways to say that Ina is to meet me in Paris, though I cannot as yet fix the day. It really does seem now as if I should soon leave Spain: and my heart rejoices, and then again it sinks. I dread the parting with Marietta, and home will be so changed, even though I shall have my darlings. I called on the consul, but he was absent from Barcelona, and not expected to return till Monday.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Saturday, 27.—We started for Montserrat at 7.25, which involved leaving the hotel at half-past six, and getting up not later than half-past five. I had ordered my breakfast the night before at six, intending to have it when I was dressed. The waiter—for there is no chambermaid—brought it at five, in the usual foreign fashion, before I was out of bed, or at all prepared for it, and left it to get quite cold. I was resolved not to bear this, and, as soon as I could, I made my way along the dark corridor, and down two flights of stairs to some lower regions, where I found a stray waiter, and insisted upon it that the coffee should be made hot. Returning to my room, I met Mr. Neville, who told me, to my dismay, that Baron von Bronnen had arrived quite late the night before, and had taken rooms in the hotel.

‘That poor child!’ was my exclamation, and I stood for a moment in thought. Then I said plainly, ‘My good friend, there must be no longer any delay in this matter. Marietta in your hands will be secure of protection; otherwise, when I am gone, these people may at any moment carry her off with them again. You must try your fate.’ He just smiled—but that was all. I felt for him from the very bottom of my heart. I was thankful I had no misgivings as to the right and wrong of the matter; for certainly I was taking a very decided part.

Marietta being with us, we had no opportunity for any private conversation afterwards. It was a cold, dreary

beginning of a day of pleasure to drive through the empty streets before the break of dawn, and wait about at that most friendless of all places, a Spanish railway station; and I suspect we all rather regretted having left our comfortable beds so early. Certainly travellers should not choose the month of December for seeing Spain: there is no country which more requires sunshine. I felt this especially as the train passed through the environs of Barcelona, and turning away from the sea carried us on into the interior. Olives and ilex, bare rocks, and a dark yellowish grey soil, gave a sombre colouring to the landscape, which one could scarcely imagine to be brightened even in summer. We were at the station at Monistiol by nine o'clock; a little omnibus was waiting there to take us to the convent. A railway, an omnibus, and Montserrat!—a most unnatural combination; yet I should not have cared for that, if we had had a prospect of seeing anything; but the thickest of fogs covered the mountain. It was precisely opposite the station, so we were told, and very near, but not a trace of it was visible. There was nothing to be done, however, but to go on; so we took our places in the little vehicle with some peasants, and after a short drive to the village of Monistiol, at the foot of the mountain, we began to ascend. Clouds still rested on the summit as we went up, but the plain below was clear, and gave us hope that we might not after all be so very unfortunate. The road wound gradually, not in and out amongst hollows of the mountain, but in zigzag cuts along one side. There were no very wonderful ravines or precipices till we neared the summit (or at least that which was the summit so far as the omnibus was concerned), and then we passed under a stupendous wall of rock, and almost immediately afterwards emerged from the dense fog into the most glorious sunshine. Such a sky! It surpassed—far surpassed—anything I had ever

seen in Italy ; and against the deep purple blue stood out gigantic pinnacles, and needles, and towers, and pyramids of pale grey stone, hundreds of feet high, rising jagged and sharp and glittering as if to pierce the sky. It was one of the sights to be treasured in memory as a subject for one's thanksgiving—something to live upon in future hours of loneliness and dreariness.

We left the wall of rock, turned a corner of the mountain, and found ourselves on the edge of a tremendously steep ravine, with the convent buildings close to us on our right, and leaving only sufficient space for the road along which we were passing. The convent is built on a narrow esplanade in the hollow of the mountain ; the giant pinnacles and huge cliffs close round and protect it behind, and the deep gorge, through which the Llobregat flows, forms its defence in front. It must once have been a very handsome building, but its day of glory is past and it is now in many parts dilapidated. Our hope and expectation had been to spend two or three hours in exploring not only the convent but the rocks and hermitages, so far as they are accessible ; but, to our extreme disappointment, we found that the omnibus was to return almost immediately, in order to take back some travellers to the railway station, and that it would not come up again for us. The travellers were Spaniards, who had already spent some hours on the mountain, had seen all that was to be seen, and were impatient to depart. We did our very utmost to persuade them to wait another two hours, and so meet the next train, but their flinty hearts were not to be softened. We were allowed but one hour, and being unwilling to lose a minute of that short time, we hurried away under the guidance of a monk.

All this time, ever since we left Madrid, in fact, Mr. Neville had made himself as dull and disagreeable as

a gentleman and a good man could do. I could not help thinking to myself that if he intended to win Marietta's heart, he certainly set about it in a very odd way. Marietta herself had flashes of enthusiasm and delight, especially when we first saw the mighty pinnacles against the blue sky, but they were only flashes. She was very sad at heart, and kept my hand in hers when we were together, pressing it fondly from time to time, and looking at me occasionally with the tears in her eyes, whilst she murmured, 'If we could only have Ina here! and if we were not going to part!'

Not very promising that seemed for Mr. Neville! And if he saw, or heard, or understood, his dulness was not to be wondered at.

The convent was soon seen. Ladies are, of course, only allowed a very cursory view; and, though the church was handsome, we were not particularly edified by the chief marvel—a Black Virgin, which, according to the legend, was hidden by the Goths in 717, to save it from the invading Moors; and, being afterwards miraculously discovered, has been ever since honoured by the richest gifts from kings and princes. What would have been really interesting to me would have been the mural inscription commemorating the fact that Ignatius Loyola watched before the Virgin previous to dedicating himself to her service; but I really did not know that the inscription was there at the time, and we were so sadly hurried we could not give our full attention to anything. A loss which I have felt ever since I came to Spain has been that of an English 'Murray.' Our French guide-book is very good of its kind, but it is not to be compared with 'Murray.' We hastened away from the church, and then—alas, for the infirmity of poor human nature!—we were obliged to think of having something to eat, for we were quite starved. A little soup, and some bread and cheese were

provided for us in a kind of rough kitchen attached to the convent, and again we hurried off to see the view from the monks' garden immediately under the precipitous rocks. I was a little tired then, and inclined to sit still, and rest in the sunshine, and think. What one needs on these occasions is less to see than to feel, and feeling is impossible when one is rushing about from one wonder to another without a moment's interval for reflection. Mr. Neville did the first sensible thing he had done that day, he urged Marietta to go with him round the head of the ravine, so as to get the view of the convent from the other side. There was a decided hesitation in her manner—I could scarcely call it reluctance; but her colour came and went quickly, and she looked to me as if to give her permission. I begged them to go and leave me, only reminding them that they must not go far, lest they should be late for the omnibus, and so they departed.

And then I thought, not of the monks and the convent, and Ignatius Loyola and the Black Virgin, not even of the rocks and precipices, and the cloudless sky, but of what I should do when I had to return home without Marietta;—how lonely Ina would be,—what an aching void there was in my own heart! what a longing I had to see my precious Cecil! And at length I started up, nervously anxious lest we should be late, still more nervous lest I should interrupt Mr. Neville just when he had worked himself up to say what I felt sure, if he had a grain of sense or courage left, he would take the opportunity of saying; and most nervous of all lest I should have been exciting false hopes, and Marietta should really be—what I knew it was quite possible, and indeed very likely, she might be—indifferent to, if not quite afraid of him.

I left the monks' garden, passed through the outbuildings of the convent into the courtyard, and saw the

omnibus standing there, the Spaniards talking to the driver, who was preparing to put his horses to the little vehicle. There was no time to be lost. Crossing the head of the ravine, I followed a winding path among roots and brushwood, leading along the slope of the precipice. The tremendous gorge, dark and wooded, lay below. It opened wide at a little distance, and beyond lay a long reach of purple distance. I could not but pause for one moment to gaze, for it was wonderfully beautiful, and a pang went to my heart as I thought it was the first and last time I should ever look upon it; but as I moved on a few steps in order to be able to see round a projecting point, I caught sight of Marietta and Mr. Neville, and the one glance put every thought unconnected with them to flight.

It was done, and all was well! I knew it by the way in which Marietta's hand rested in his, whilst her eyes were bent upon the ground, and a smile of intense loving trustfulness rested on her face. And he? I really cannot describe the change which in those short minutes had come over him. It was a kind of transfiguration. There was a wholly different expression of countenance and manner—a brightness which, in its perfect happiness, had something in it scarcely belonging to this world. They looked round as I drew near, and Marietta blushed painfully, and had an impulse to withdraw her hand; but Mr. Neville kept it, and as I came up to him he laid it in mine, and said—

‘You will give your child your blessing. She does not know how to be happy without it.’

I put my arm round her, and drew her to my heart. ‘God bless you, darling!’ I said; ‘it is all that I have wished.’

‘And is it all right?’ asked Marietta, smiling through a mist of happy tears. ‘I have been afraid——’

‘Of what?’ I said. ‘Of doing what every one who cares for you will rejoice at from the very depths of the heart?’

The words had scarcely escaped me when I thought of Mr. L’Estrange.

Marietta’s quick eye saw there was a thought unexpressed. She urged me to tell it. Was it wrong? Could it be wrong? Was there anyone who could think it so?

‘Only Henry Anson,’ said Mr. Neville, a little gravely.

‘And he had his fate settled before he left Madrid; was it not so, Marietta?’ I inquired.

The poor child coloured at the question, and made no reply; and I cared for the Rector too much to allude to him, and went on in front to avoid any more questioning.

Happy as we were, we were all—at least, if I may judge from myself—excessively awkward and uncomfortable, and felt glad that the narrowness of the path prevented the necessity of continuing the conversation. Mr. Neville and Marietta to the last moment stood together looking into the ravine. They forgot me; they forgot also cloaks, and shawls, and guide-book, and the little painted ivory tabernacle which had been bought from the old monks, containing within it a rosary of garnets, and a tiny medal of the Black Virgin. I had to think of everything, and I was only too glad to do so. I made Marietta mount the *banquette* in front of the little omnibus. I intended to have made Mr. Neville take his seat by her, whilst I went in the inside, but they would not hear of this, so room was found for me on the same bench; and in this most unromantic way we descended the mountain.

The fog had quite vanished by this time, and a vast extent of landscape lay open to our view—a panorama extending from the Pyrenees to the Mediterranean. That sounds very beautiful, and it was beautiful; but not because Spain is a beautiful country, and we looked down

upon towns, and villages, and woods; for the trees were grey olives and dark firs, and the land in this wintry season was brown with tillage, or else tossed about in what looked like mounds of rock and sand thrown up by an earthquake. The extent and the colouring made it striking; but Mr. Neville and I agreed that it would be a hopeless country to have anything to do with. The real charm to me lay in the magnificent mountain, rising abruptly from the plain with its pinnacles of rock, its mighty walls, and deep ravines. The long snowy line of the Pyrenees looked and felt quite home-like when I thought that Pau lay beyond them. It was cold on the mountain, but not bitterly so, and we were back again at Barcelona by six. We should have been earlier, but these Spanish railways have as yet only one line, and we were obliged to wait at a station till a train from Barcelona could pass us, and this delayed us twenty minutes or half an hour. The *table d'hôte* dinner was, fortunately, over, and we had a pleasant little meal by ourselves; and, by a kind of mutual consent, put aside all prospects of difficulty, all thoughts of parting, and agreed to be very happy.

But when dinner was over and Marietta had gone to her aunt, Mr. Neville came to my room, and we had a long talk about past, present, and future. We came to no definite conclusions, for I felt that I must have time to think over everything by myself.

CHAPTER XIX.

Sunday, 28.—I have felt more thankful than I can say for to-day's rest and quiet, and the Church service at the consul's house, though it was shortened in a most unsatisfactory manner. I sat down to think afterwards with the conviction that I should be guided to a right judgment. After grave consideration I arrived at a result which Mr. Neville suggested last night, and which I, in my secret heart, agreed to, though I did not choose to own it till I had thought the matter over alone. Marietta must be married at once. If I could stay here it might be possible to delay, though even then Lady Chase and this odious Baron might at any moment bring us into difficulties. But as the case stands—as I really must return home as soon as possible—it is indispensable that Marietta should be left under safe protection. If she were not married, the fact of her engagement would render her position even more awkward than it is at present. I felt we should have some difficulty in bringing her round to our ideas, and I told Mr. Neville so when he came to my room after luncheon; but circumstances favoured us.

Marietta had hitherto seen little or nothing of the Baron; he has advisedly kept in the background. But to-day, by a most happy accident (if one may so call it), she has been a little enlightened as to his communications and understanding with Lady Chase, and the influence they both have over her aunt has frightened her considerably.

It seems—so she told us when she found her way to my room just before dinner—that Lady Chase yesterday, whilst Marietta was away, took the opportunity to suggest another move. Delicious as the climate of Barcelona is—warm, yet fresh and inspiring—Mrs. Randolph has not rallied, and, as it is my firm conviction, is not likely to rally. Lady Chase has proposed Algeria, and Mrs. Randolph, clinging to anything which gives hope of a change for the better, has, with her usual excitement and impatience, caught at the idea, and is now, as Marietta expresses it, wild to be off immediately.

They know full well that it is impossible for me to follow them to Algeria, and they do not suspect that Mr. Neville is interested in their affairs, except as they before concerned John Penrhyn, and as they now concern me; and so they believe that we shall both go back to England together, and that, once in Algeria, they shall be able to carry out their schemes without interruption. Marietta says that she brought forward all the objections possible—the fatigue of another move, the expense, the distance, the uncertainty as to whether the climate would be of use,—but it was all of no avail; and when she asked how they were to make the arrangements for the journey and to secure apartments, she was told by Lady Chase that a gentleman, a friend of hers, was prepared to do everything for them; in fact, it was possible that they might all form one party. Who this gentleman was was kept a mystery.

Marietta believed the Baron had gone from Valencia back to Madrid, and did not know of his arrival here (we forgot to mention it yesterday) till, to her surprise and annoyance, she met him this afternoon in the hotel. Naturally, then she put two and two together, and asked her aunt the plain question, ‘Was he the person intended?’ Mrs. Randolph could not deny it. She has not yet

attained Lady Chase's facility of telling lies with an unblushing face. And then Marietta says that she gave her opinion very plainly—so plainly, indeed, that Mrs. Randolph went off into one of her old fits of passion, became utterly exhausted, and, in fact, has gone back many degrees in consequence.

Marietta blames herself; and yet, as she says, how could it have been avoided? To go to Algeria and make one party with Lady Chase and Baron von Bronnen!—it could not be; and yet to leave her poor dying aunt, to disregard her uncle's last injunction—that also could not be. She came to me in the greatest distress. Her engagement seemed only to render everything more complicated and to make her more unhappy. She must, she said, be separated from Mr. Neville; it would be impossible that it should be otherwise.

I said directly, 'Why, my child, must you be separated from Mr. Neville?'

She looked at me in astonishment. 'I cannot keep him here. He must go to England—to India—I don't know where.'

'Neither do I know where, without you,' I said. 'Only consent to give him the full right to protect you, and all will be easy.'

'But it could not be so quick! It is out of the question. And he would take me away from my aunt. Oh no! I must attend to duty before happiness.'

'My dear Marietta,' I said, 'you must allow me to be plain with you in this matter. Your temptation is an unreasonable Quixotic view of self-sacrifice which will end in sacrificing others. You have a real duty to Mr. Neville, and you are bound to remember it, even though it should secure your own happiness. He cannot leave you alone with these people, neither can I; but, as we are now placed, neither of us can really interfere to protect or advise: so that we are in a most awkward dilemma. Con-

sent to marry at once, and Mr. Neville will have an authority which will enable him to assist you, and, in doing this, to assist your aunt. You must be as well aware as I am, that the one essential thing is to remove her from the influence of these wretched people. When he is your husband that will soon be managed.'

'She will not consent,' said Marietta.

'Then, my dear, if she will not consent, it is absolutely necessary that you should give her up.'

'I could not; it would be impossible. My promise to my uncle——'

'Never involved that you were to live with your aunt, or to be with her, if she chose to have disreputable friends. Remember it was the one point on which he himself was firm.'

I paused, for I saw that this last suggestion had been effective.

'But if I were married I must leave her,' said Marietta.

'No, my love, that is precisely what you must not do, at least, not necessarily. Mr. Neville said to me, only last night, that if he could persuade you to marry at once he would remain here for another six weeks, or even two months; and then, if necessary, he would take you and Mrs. Randolph to Cannes or Pau, go himself to England, and settle himself to his business in London. He must be called to the Bar immediately, for he has no time to lose. In the summer Mrs. Randolph would, he hopes, be able to return to England; her future must then be left. It would be simple folly—it would be actually wrong—to sacrifice the happiness of two lives—your own and Mr. Neville's—to any supposed duty to Mrs. Randolph.'

'If I did not long for it so much,' said Marietta with a sigh, 'it would be easy.'

‘My dear child,’ I said, a little impatiently, ‘there is such a thing as common sense, but really now and then it seems to me you forget it. Because one longs for a thing it is not necessarily sinful. Of course you will be very thankful to be married; you have been so tossed about the world that, putting aside affection, it will be a haven of rest to you. And as regards deciding in favour of one’s own inclinations, just see what I am doing now. I tell you candidly that if I can see you Mr. Neville’s wife before I leave Barcelona’ (Marietta started)—‘yes,’ I continued, ‘before I leave Barcelona, I shall be relieved from a very great perplexity. I know I have a personal interest in what I am urging, yet I have not the slightest hesitation in urging it. I have tried all my life to be honest with myself, and so now I venture to trust myself, and I am sure you can do the same. It is right and best that you should marry at once—as soon as possible. And now I shall send Mr. Neville to plead his own cause.’

She caught my hand, trying to stop me, but I would not be prevailed upon; and I went directly to Mr. Neville’s room, and told him that I had made the way clear for him. He went to Marietta immediately. I had my walking-dress on, and in order to be out of the way for a little while I thought I would go out; I should be unnoticed in the crowded Rambla, and I might even go as far as the Muralla del Mar.

Before I came to Spain I had been told that a lady could not venture to walk alone; but since I had been at Barcelona I had found that at my age it was quite practicable. At Madrid, Marietta and I were indeed one day followed by some little boys who, because we wore black Shetland veils, called after us, ‘*Mascarita! mascarita!*’—a proceeding which did not at all surprise me. But at Barcelona, even when I was by myself, I was only stared at a little, because I was a foreigner. No other notice

was taken of me ; and I sat down on a bench overlooking the sea, and began to think over what I had just done. In spite of my assertion of confidence in my own honesty of purpose, I must confess that I felt a little self-distrust. I did not, indeed, really doubt that I had acted rightly in the matter, but I pictured to myself Marietta's future, and the possibility that after all Mr. Neville might not make her happy. She might in that case fairly reproach me for having hurried her on without giving her time for consideration. It was a very grave responsibility. But then, on the other hand, Marietta had voluntarily engaged herself: there was no pressure used on that point. She had seen as much of Mr. Neville as the generality of girls do of the men they marry. She evidently preferred him and his poverty to young Anson and his inheritance, and her choice was unquestionably to be approved. I could not doubt Mr. Neville's goodness. The high character which the world gave him had been confirmed by my own close observation ; and as to his stiffness and severity of manner, that was a matter of taste. If Marietta did not object to it, no one else had a right to consider it an objection. No, I had done wisely. I had nothing to reproach myself with. But what would the world say ?

That is a question which one is bound to consider in cases of taste and external propriety ; but I don't feel one need trouble oneself much about it when the happiness of life is concerned ; and if I had had any lingering doubt as to the wisdom of the marriage I think it would have been put to flight, at least for the present, by the appearance of Baron von Bronnen lounging along the promenade with a cigar in his mouth, and accompanied by a companion as unpleasant-looking as himself. My impulse was to move away, but I felt that would be cowardly ; so I continued gazing over the wall upon the

ships which crowded the harbour. I felt him approach, though I did not actually see him. He came up to me by himself; his friend lingered at a little distance. He spoke courteously: but when I looked round, and saw him glaring at me, I trembled all over.

‘I did not expect to see you here, madam,’ he said, meaningly.

‘Neither did I expect to be here, Monsieur le Baron,’ was my reply.

‘You came, I think, with Mr. Neville?’

‘Yes, I came with Mr. Neville. When we found that Mrs. Randolph had changed her mind and was not going to Malaga, we thought it right to follow her.’

‘Oh! Mr. Penrhyn is gone, I believe?’

‘Yes, he is gone.’

‘To England?’

‘I cannot say for certain.’

‘But you think it probable?’

‘If you wish to know Mr. Penrhyn’s movements,’ I said, ‘you will do well to inquire of Mr. Neville.’

‘You can be cautious, I see,’ he replied, fiercely; ‘and no doubt, also, you can keep a secret, especially when you know how much depends upon it.’

‘Yes,’ I said, ‘I can keep a secret; and, Monsieur le Baron, I can also reveal one. I told Mr. Neville that Mr. Penrhyn was at Barcelona.’

I spoke boldly, but I am sure I must have turned pale, for I was terribly frightened.

‘You did?’ he muttered between his teeth.

‘Yes,’ I said, ‘I did. You extorted a promise from me by fear, and when you ventured to tell a lie in my presence, I felt myself released from it. Mr. Penrhyn is now beyond your reach, and whatever communication you have to make must be made to his cousin, Mr. Neville, who will remain here probably for some weeks.’

An oath escaped the Baron's lips.

'And this is your doing?' he said.

'Partly, not entirely.'

'And you call yourself a lady—a woman of honour!'

'More truly, I hope, Monsieur, than you can call yourself a gentleman of honour,' was my reply.

He bit his lips, turned away for an instant, and then, coming back, said,

'You shall rue this.'

'Very possibly I may,' I said, quietly. 'That is not a matter which troubles me now. I am no longer without a friend. You cannot again frighten me by threats. I would advise you rather to look to yourself.'

'What do you mean? I insist upon knowing.' He came up quite close to me. I rose and walked very slowly away, keeping amongst the crowd on the Muralla, and then turning into the Rambla. The man followed me for a few paces, but, as I drew near the hotel, he rejoined his companion.

Of course he is a coward, as well as a bully, and I have alarmed him; but this renders it still more important that Mr. Neville should at once come forward and declare his true position with regard to Marietta. He will then be able to take the upper hand; and I cannot but think that these wretched people would, in that case, succumb and give up their pursuit of poor Mrs. Randolph and her money. As for myself, I am ashamed to feel how brave I can be now that I have Mr. Neville at hand to support me. I know I was bold and outspoken to-day. And I feel, too, that I have no dread of the Baron's revenge; but I do not therefore give myself the least credit for bravery. Put me back at Valencia, and I should be just as great a coward as I was before. My one comfort is, that I told the man what I did, and did not leave him to find it out. That has brought back a little of my self-respect, which,

I confess, has been very uncomfortably lessened by the events of the last ten days.

I found Mr. Neville and Marietta still talking together when I reached my own room. The opportunity of a private conversation had been very enticing; and I suspect they had been led on to many other subjects besides that for which the interview had been originally proposed. How that had been settled I saw at once. I looked at them, and laughingly asked,—

‘ Well, is the day fixed ? ’

And then Marietta began scolding me, and declared they could not at all agree; whilst Mr. Neville said it was a question for the consul, but it was certainly to be early in the next week. I praised them for having made the best use of their time, and begged them now to give their attention to me, whilst I related my interview with the Baron.

It was the first time Marietta had heard of his conduct to me, and the impression made upon her worked well for my wishes. She had always shrunk from him, now she dreaded him, and felt quite as strongly as we could that everything must be done to separate him and his sister from Mrs. Randolph. We talked a long time, and, upon the whole, fairly to the purpose; for we ended by agreeing that the engagement should instantly be announced, and that, if possible, the marriage should take place on Tuesday week. It seems alarmingly rapid, but the Bakers leave Barcelona on the following Wednesday, and I must go with them, or I shall be obliged to travel alone. I shall be able to make arrangements now to meet Ina in Paris. As for news from home, I don’t expect any, or see, indeed, how it is possible to have any. This marriage will be a thunderbolt to Ina. I must write to her to-day.

Monday, December 29.—The announcement is made; Marietta told her aunt this morning: she did not venture to do so yesterday, Mrs. Randolph was so unwell. It has

been taken strangely, and yet, I think, in a way we might have anticipated if we had only considered Mrs. Randolph's character. She is excited, as a child might be with a new plaything. She thinks neither of right nor wrong; she does not look to the future; she makes no inquiry as to ways and means; she is simply amused and pleased at the idea that her niece is to be married. It would have been different, probably, if it had been proposed for Marietta to leave her. Her selfishness would have come in then, but as it is, she says the plans are all delightful, and she shall get quite well and return to England, and then she can live close to her dear niece, and perhaps the tiresome old great-uncle will let her have her precious Victor with her. Lady Chase is sullen and silent. The Baron keeps in the background. If there was the very faintest possibility of being able to interpose obstacles and objections, I do not doubt they would be raised; but Mr. Neville and Marietta are both of them completely independent; there is not a single person to say them nay. The fight will begin after the marriage. At present Mr. Neville is content to let things go on in the old way; he does not presume to interfere in Mrs. Randolph's arrangements, and any suggestion of a move would now be negatived at once by Mrs. Randolph herself, who is working herself up into a fever of interest in the preparations for the event. The mere fact of this operates against Lady Chase's influence, and so far it is a great gain. But poor Mrs. Randolph will suffer for it afterwards, and she is very ill. For her there is a far more important event than marriage gathering in the near distance. And how little she thinks of it!

CHAPTER XX.

Thursday, January 1; 18. . A new year! It seems like a new epoch in life, and much of the past has absolutely ended with the old year. I quite well remember looking forward from last New Year's day with the thought that everything was peaceful and bright, and that there seemed very little to dread, and yet with somewhat of misgiving, arising from the very fact that there were no clouds in the horizon. It was too clear for security. And what changes and trials have come! Yet everything which concerns myself is secondary at this moment: I think of no one but Marietta. She is extremely happy; calmer, quieter than usual; but so perfectly contented, it is a rest even to look at her. But I have not been resting much physically, for I have been hunting for an *appartement* with Mr. Neville. He proposes moving into it directly, and taking Mrs. Randolph with him. It will be a less expensive proceeding than living at an hotel, and it will at once sever the link between Mrs. Randolph and Lady Chase. I don't think the latter was at all prepared for the idea, and when she heard of it she raised innumerable objections. I was amused and edified by the quiet way in which Mr. Neville put them all aside by merely saying that it must be, that Marietta had come to Spain to take care of her aunt and nurse her, and therefore her home must be Mrs. Randolph's. He really scarcely gave poor Mrs. Randolph any option in the matter; and I thought at first she would have resisted, especially when Lady Chase

argued the point before her. But she is now too weak to exert herself in the way of opposition, and Mr. Neville is one of those men whom no woman would wish to oppose, if she could help it.

Marietta, though, does oppose him, playfully and prettily, and carries her own point whenever she wishes it. Mr. Neville wished to find rooms in a quiet street; Marietta insisted upon being, if possible, in the Rambla, because she thinks it will amuse her aunt: and we have engaged a pleasant comfortable suite of apartments at the lower end of the Rambla, with a quiet bedroom for Mrs. Randolph, which is the great *desideratum*. I really believe she is as well here as she could be anywhere. The climate is charming. A French physician attends her, but neither he nor anyone can do much for her, except relieve symptoms. Marietta sighs for the day when she can have her quite to herself, and try to turn her thoughts to something better than all these little excitements.

Saturday, January 3.—A great effort has been made to work upon Mrs. Randolph's feelings, and induce her to break off from Marietta, and attach herself wholly to Lady Chase. I rather expected something of the kind when I found that Lady Chase and the Baron still lingered in Barcelona, though professing to have business which would take them away. Yesterday Mr. Neville persuaded Marietta and myself to go with him to Monjuich, a hill near the city which commands a magnificent panorama. Mrs. Randolph seemed a little better, and Marietta had been in such close attendance upon her aunt, that it was really necessary to take the opportunity of giving her a little change and fresh air. I should have been more averse to leaving Mrs. Randolph, but that Sophie, the French maid, is entirely in our interests, and has an extreme dislike to Lady Chase, and has been so

rejoiced at the prospect of a change of dynasty that I felt she would keep a good watch during our absence.

We were only absent a couple of hours, but when we came back we found poor Mrs. Randolph in a very excited state of mind, exhibiting itself in a mixture of passion, hysterics, and reproaches. Lady Chase had been with her, and had persuaded her to believe that Mr. Neville and I had some sinister motive for hurrying on the marriage; that Marietta was deceived, and would be made miserable for life; that it was her duty to interfere, if possible, to stop the marriage, at any rate to delay it; that nothing but a removal to Algeria would save her own life; that—in fact, we had a most painful scene, and Marietta was so wretched and frightened, and so especially afraid that by carrying out our plans in opposition to Mrs. Randolph we might really endanger her aunt's life, that I was seriously uneasy lest Mr. Neville's feelings should be wounded. He is by no means an un-exacting lover; he requires great devotion. He cannot understand that any claim should in the slightest degree interfere with his own; and Marietta, with her womanly tenderness for her aunt, and her over-scrupulous conscience, often talks as if Mrs. Randolph had still the right to her first attention. But on this occasion I must say Mr. Neville behaved extremely well. He bore patiently with Mrs. Randolph, and soothed Marietta, and at length, to my great satisfaction, took the upper hand, just as if he had been already Marietta's husband, and said decidedly that Lady Chase could no longer be allowed to have any intercourse with Marietta, and Mrs. Randolph must take her choice: either she must at once leave Barcelona with Lady Chase and never see her niece again, or she must consent to give up Lady Chase as a friend. He said this in Marietta's presence and mine. Marietta trembled all over, and I thought she would have burst forth with some

ejaculation which would have ruined all: but I kept her hand in mine and whispered, ' Silence, patience, dear child; she must and will give in; ' and, after a passionate burst of tears, Mrs. Randolph yielded, and Mr. Neville left us to find Lady Chase, and give her his opinion as to her conduct, and communicate the decision at which we had all arrived. He did not come back for some time: when he did it was with the rejoicing news that the Baron and his sister were to start at eight o'clock that very evening for Gerona.

Lady Chase was to be permitted to say farewell to Mrs. Randolph, but only in Marietta's presence and mine.

How this departure had been purchased I had no suspicion at the time, but it has come out since in the course of conversation. Mr. Neville has paid John Penrhyn's debt—if debt it can really be called, when it was the result, I have not the slightest doubt, of dishonourable trickery. Mr. Neville says himself that he has only advanced the money, that John Penrhyn is certain to repay it, but it may be a long time first. The young man is at this moment entirely dependent on his uncle, and his allowance is only sufficient for his ordinary expenses. At any rate Mr. Neville has put himself to great inconvenience, and I can quite estimate what he has done, though he speaks so lightly of it to Marietta that I really do not think she fully understands it.

The parting between Lady Chase and Mrs. Randolph was short, and on Mrs. Randolph's side touching. She does actually care for this woman, who has always shown her what is called kindness; and I am sure it brought before her the precarious state of her own health. For the first time she alluded to the probability that she might never recover. Marietta was cold and distant. I merely bowed; it was all very awkward and disagreeable, and very sad, even hard for Mrs. Randolph, but what could

have been done differently? In going to my room afterwards, I came suddenly upon the Baron. He stopped, scowled at me, and said in a meaning tone: 'Madam, we shall meet again.' It sounded very alarming, but when I mentioned it afterwards to Mr. Neville, he laughed and said: 'Oh! yes, no doubt he scowls and threatens, he can do nothing else, but he is the most arrant coward in Christendom; and so well known in England that he dares not show his face there, so you may feel quite safe.'

Very rational, very true. But still I devoutly hope I never may meet him again.

Monday, January 5.—A most busy day. We have been moving into the new *appartement* in the Rambla, Mrs. Randolph, Marietta, and the maid. It has been a serious affair. Happily, the sun shone, and it was one of Mrs. Randolph's good days, so that we managed it better than could have been expected; but the luggage which Mrs. Randolph carries about with her is something wonderful. Poor Mr. Neville! I am not quite sure that he has yet faced the fact that he is marrying the aunt as well as the niece. I have been engaged also with my own little packings: for the Bakers and myself have arranged to go to-morrow evening to Gerona (which is as far as the railway is as yet completed), sleep there, and proceed the next day by Diligence to Perpignan. From thence I go direct to Paris, where Ina is to meet me. That sounds all pleasant enough, and I shall be rejoiced, no words can say how rejoiced, to be out of Spain. But to-morrow also I must part from Marietta. She and Mr. Neville go for the one day to Manresa, so that I shall not see them again. How great the wrench is, and what Dernham will be without Marietta, I do not let myself think. I have had a letter from Ina, full of surprise, and regret, and affection, but yet not quite, not entirely, what I had anticipated. She says, 'how I shall miss darling Marietta! how terrible

it will be to be without her!’ But in the next sentence she goes off into an account of a delightful expedition to Orthez, which most unfortunately Mr. Anson could not join because Sir John had summoned him to England. I am not sure whether my little Agnes will not, after all, be the greatest sufferer from the change in our once bright home.

I have had a conversation with Mr. Neville about that very sublunary, but very necessary, matter of consideration—money. He has been extremely anxious to have everything done regularly and legally, but this has been difficult. With the consul’s aid he has, however, managed fairly well. His one great desire has been that Marietta’s little fortune should be settled entirely upon herself, that he should have no control over it, except so far as having a life interest in it. They will begin house-keeping, or rather *appartement*-keeping, with about 450*l.* per annum, including in this Mrs. Randolph’s legacy; not a fortune, but they can live upon it, and Mr. Neville must get on in his profession. The question concerning Marietta’s legacy he will now manage himself, and will do it much better than I could, and this is a great relief. Whenever I am inclined to have the slightest doubt about the marriage I comfort myself by thinking that if it were Agnes instead of Marietta I should be thoroughly satisfied, more so to-night than I have been at all; for, after we had discussed worldly matters, we got upon more serious subjects, and Mr. Neville came out more unreservedly than I have ever known him. He is a man whose religion is shown much more by deeds than by words. He has a shrinking dislike to many of the *Shibboleths* which are adopted by the religious world—as it is called—and he keeps his deeper feelings upon all subjects very much to himself. But I felt what he was at the time of Mr. Randolph’s death, and since I have been in Spain, and we have been thrown more together, and under circumstances

which would have been a test of any man's religious feeling, I have been more and more convinced that the real root of all this strictness of his, is higher than mere morality. To-night we wandered on in our conversation far into the future—not the unknown, but the known, which must come to all. Mrs. Randolph's condition and her state of mind could scarcely fail to bring it before us, and, as Mr. Neville said, marriage in itself, if it is anything, is the beginning of an Eternity, the seal of a love over which time can have no power; and so it must bring solemn thoughts. Marietta came to us just at last, when her aunt was gone to bed, and prevented us from becoming too grave. Tears and smiles succeed each other with her so rapidly that we, undemonstrative English, can scarcely help being amused with her, even in our most serious moments. I watched her to-night as she was talking to Mr. Neville, sitting on a low stool at my feet, and holding his hand caressingly; and wondered in my own mind whether any English girl could ever have suited him as well. I doubt it. He wants to be helped forward in affection as much as any man I ever saw, and yet he would be utterly revolted at anything like forwardness in a woman. It is Marietta's exquisite simplicity, and transparent truthfulness, and the conviction that there is nothing hidden, nothing intentional in anything she does or says, that makes one delight in an absence of reserve which, in another case, one might really find fault with. Oh dear! how terribly I shall miss her!

CHAPTER XXI.

Tuesday, January 6.—Marietta's wedding day. The great event is over. I must write it, though I have not a minute to spare.

We were at the consul's house this morning at half-past ten. The ceremony was to take place in the room fitted up as a chapel. The Bakers and myself were the only persons invited to be present, besides the consul and his wife, and Mrs. Watts, the wife of Mr. Watts the clergyman. Miss Baker was bridesmaid. Marietta wore a light lilac silk and a white bonnet; she had to start for Manresa immediately after the ceremony; and even if she had wished it there would have been no time to make any change in her dress. Romance, I am afraid, would have been shocked at us all: we were obliged to be so very matter of fact in all our arrangements. Italian excitement was under the pressure of the moment subdued by Marietta's English self-control. She only looked very pale, and the mists which occasionally gathered over those wonderful deep dark eyes of hers showed an intensity of feeling; but we had no actual tears. She went through all the legal part of the affair, knowing just what she was to do, and I looked at her handwriting afterwards, and saw only a very faint indication of nervousness. Her voice was firm and distinct when she was called upon to answer in the service. Mr. Neville was more outwardly moved than she was; his lips were quite white, and his voice once faltered, but when the service was over it was all different.

He was himself then again, supremely happy, thoughtful, energetic. Marietta kept up bravely till we had gone back to the new *appartement* in the Rambla. It was only when she went to the room with me alone, after having shown herself to Mrs. Randolph, that she entirely broke down. We were to part, and when should we meet again? In the midst of all our fears, and hopes, and business, lately we have had very little time to face the answer to this question, and when Marietta put it to me in a voice choked with sobs, it gave me great pain.

But we have left it,—both of us. It is all in God's hands. The dear child is gone. I gave to her my last kiss, and to Mr. Neville my last most hearty grasp of the hand, and stood and watched the carriage as it drove down the Rambla to the railway station, and then I went back to my room at the Cuatro Naciones, feeling more entirely lonely and sad at heart than I can attempt to describe in words. And now I must put up my Journal and finish my packing, and prepare for leaving Spain.

Paris, Hôtel de Londres: January 12.—Once more with Ina, and on my way to England. We go straight through to Folkestone to-morrow. It has been a trying meeting for us both, but we have had so much to say to each other, and our interests and sympathies are so entirely one, that there has been great comfort in it. Ina looks very much better than when I left her at Pau, and except when we talk of the past she has greatly recovered her spirits. The relief I feel myself at being out of Spain is even greater than I anticipated. I seemed to breathe more freely when we had crossed the frontier. The travelling was not unpleasant, though we had a cold four hours' journey to Gerona the evening of January 6; and found but indifferent accommodation in a large old-fashioned rambling Spanish inn, where they gave us but little to eat, and where the mulled wine which we ordered was undrinkable. I

had a bed like a board, a pillow like a stone, and a kind of straw mattress for a counterpane, which kept slipping off all the night. Altogether a most uncomfortable experience.

The next morning we had just time to see the cathedral, which is very handsome, built of dark stone, with a superb flight of steps leading up to it. The Gothic arcade of the clerestory is beautiful, and there are good pictures and painted windows; upon the whole, it was well worth seeing. We just looked into a Byzantine church, dedicated to some saint whose name I had never before heard, and found there some reverend old monks and priests at their devotions—quiet and intent as if there were no such things as railways and Diligences in existence; and then we rushed away from them, and were just in time to start for Perpignan in the Diligence. Mrs. and Miss Baker and I had the *coupé*, and were very comfortable. Mr. Baker mounted to the *banquette*. We had very pretty and often striking scenery the whole way; mountains in the distance, outliers of the Pyrenees, the highest covered with snow—the nearer hills picturesque; groves of olive and cork trees—rivers with sandy, stony beds;—more cultivation and signs of life than in other parts of Spain. The colouring was lovely, especially towards evening. We passed through one really large town, Figueras, a frontier town (one notices and remembers large towns in Spain, they are so few and far between), and after that we ascended a spur of the Pyrenees, and went through a kind of pass—a mere nothing compared with Alpine passes, and then we descended rapidly by a very good road and felt ourselves really in France.

We were at Perpignan by half-past eight. The hotel was rough, but the beds were comfortable, and—we were out of Spain!

The next day we went on to Lyons, slept there, had a little time for lionising, started again at night, and arrived in Paris yesterday afternoon. So ends my Spanish journey. I found a letter from Marietta awaiting me here. She is, so she tells me, the happiest of the happy; only needing her Dernham friends to leave her nothing to wish for. If she can say this in an *appartement* in the Rambla, what would she say in England? In a little note, enclosed for Ina, she says that Mrs. Randolph is very weak, but much quieter and calmer. That would seem as if Mrs. Randolph was already profiting by the absence of the persons she had about her. Mr. Neville writes a few words, and signs himself, 'yours affectionately and gratefully for life.' Yes, I have secured him a treasure, and I fully believe he appreciates it.

Later, 10 P.M.—A most astounding telegram from Barcelona a few hours since. John Penrhyn returned home to find his uncle unconscious from an apoplectic fit. The old man is dead. The will has been opened, and he is disinherited! The landed property goes to Mr. Neville, the personal property is to be divided amongst all but John.

Poor John! I could almost say poor Mr. Neville! He will feel so deeply the young man's disappointment. If John had returned sooner would things have been different?

Well may we pray to be guided and guarded amidst the changes and chances of this mortal life.

CHAPTER XXII.

FOUR YEARS AFTERWARDS.

June 6.—My dear Ina's two-and-twentieth birthday—an important day, as she is now of age. She is spending it at Arling. It was Mrs. Penrhyn's special request, and I could not say nay. I was to have been there with Agnes and Essie yesterday, but just as it was all settled Agnes was taken ill with a feverish cold, and I was afraid to leave her. She is nearly well again, but it was too late to make an alteration in my plans when Mrs. Penrhyn had filled the house. Ina and I have interchanged letters. I had so much to say of love and hope and tender anxiety, that I am afraid I gave her very little news. She gives me a good deal.

' Arling, June 6, 18—.

' MY DEAREST MAMMA,—You will be looking out for a letter I know to-morrow, and so shall I. I could not bear the day to pass without your hearing from me, and I am quite sure I shall hear from you. I have not yet recovered my disappointment at your being unable to come to Arling. I am quite certain grandmamma wished it very much, and you would have seen all the wonderful things that are to be done in my honour. As I told you the other day, there is to be a treat for the school-children in the afternoon, and a dinner for the old men and women, and a procession, and flags and banners, and then a dance in the evening for us; and all the Worthingtons are to be here.

It will be delightful. If you could only have been with us, and Agnes and Essie! You might have stayed the fortnight, and then we might all have gone home together in time for Charlie and Hugh's holidays. I forget, though, I suppose Charlie will have to go to a tutor if he means by-and-by to try for a scholarship at Oxford. But dear mamma, do you know, I heard the other day that he has set his heart upon going into the army, and that he says he does not like to tell you because it will vex you, but that he feels that an Oxford education will be quite thrown away upon him; it had much better be kept for Hugh. Frank Neville said this, and so it came round to me—through Miss Charlotte Anson, a niece of our Lady Anson. She is staying at Lord Worthington's. She met Frank at some ball. I am afraid it must be true, because Charlie tells Frank Neville everything. I can't bear to worry you, but I thought it right you should know. I am enchanted at the idea of having Mr. Neville and Marietta for the summer at Woodleigh, and so glad the place is untenanted just now, but I am sorry that Marietta should not be well and require sea-bathing. I long to see the little Cissy; Charlotte Anson, who has seen her, says she is lovely, just like her mother. Grandmamma has a most beautiful sketch of the house at Cannes, where poor Mrs. Randolph died. It hangs in her bedroom close to Aunt Katharine's likeness, and there is a coloured photograph of Mrs. Randolph by it;—very like her, only perhaps a little flattered. Grandmamma means to ask Mr. Neville and Marietta to stay here, before they go back to the north. Lord Worthington, who has a brother living near Chilhurst, praises Mr. Neville up to the skies as a good landlord, and says the property has doubled in value since it has been in his hands. Lord Hopeton, too, thinks Marietta quite fascinating, and you may be sure I chime in with the praises; but I am afraid she must have

lost some of her beauty since last year, for Lord Hopeton says when he saw her she was looking so very thin. I do trust Dernham air will set her up. Aunt Bessie sends her love to you, and would very much like to see you. Please tell Agnes that she will find the Sunday School Register in one of the upper drawers of my wardrobe—I don't know which. I advise her to get a new one, and begin afresh. I think I shall leave my class in her hands for a few weeks when I get home, as really, after all I have been doing here, I shall want a little rest. I have bought a charming copy of Macaulay's *Lays* for Essie's birthday. Give the little pet a great kiss for me. Can it possibly be true that Mr. L'Estrange is going to give up his living? Charlotte Anson says there is such a report, but I suppose it is not true, as you say nothing of it. She told me the other day quite in confidence that she was sure he was desperately in love with Marietta three years ago; for she was at the manor when the news of her marriage came to Dernham, and he shut himself up in his house for a week, and never even went to see the poor people—except one man who was dying—and when he came out again, he looked quite as if he had had a severe illness. You know we thought him looking very ill when we came back. I wonder how they will meet now, and whether he has quite got over it.

‘Dearest mamma, I have written you a gossiping letter, because there were so many things I wanted to say, but the real reason I had for writing was to send you my very truest and best love, and thanks for all you have done for me. It always comes back to me—especially on my birthday,—what I should have been without you. And this two-and-twentieth birthday is such a great and important one, though I am not—what grandmamma will persist in calling me—an heiress. I wish I was a

great deal better than I am, but one thing I am sure of, that I should have been much worse without you.

‘ Ever your most loving child,

‘ INA.

‘ P.S. Is it not strange that John Penrhyn should so entirely have changed places with Mr. Neville, and be going to India? They say he is sure to succeed there as a barrister. Grandmamma has quite forgiven him for being brought up a Neville, since he took a double first class. She says that being disinherited has been the making of him; and he certainly is uncommonly pleasant. He was here only a few days ago. Grandmamma says she would give some help towards John’s expenses, but Mr. Neville takes everything upon himself, and has allowed him three hundred a year ever since old Mr. Neville’s death. Grandmamma thinks that John ought not to want more. I suppose she is right, at any rate Mr. Neville is bound to help him, as he has the property which John expected to have.’

Mrs. Bradshaw appeared just as I had finished reading this letter, and I showed it to her. She came by invitation to dine and keep Ina’s birthday. In the afternoon we had a long talk about many things. It was to me by far the most satisfactory way of keeping the birthday, which could not but bring sad thoughts to me, and I was thankful to be spared festivities. Colonel Bradshaw’s children, Frances and Anna, were invited to spend the afternoon with Agnes and Essie, and they all went on the shore together. Mrs. Bradshaw and I sat out in the garden, under the pleasant shade of the ash trees, a happy murmur of bees, and twittering of birds around us, and beyond, the grand roll of the sea. It was very delicious, and Ina’s letter gave us sufficient subject for conversation. Mrs. Bradshaw wanted to know why I was so glad not to be at Arling. -

‘Because,’ I said, ‘I never, if I can avoid it, place myself in a false position; and at Arling, on the day of Ina’s coming of age, I must have been so. You know I am her sole guardian, and this is a fact which Mrs. Penrhyn never forgives or forgets; she always does her very utmost to put me aside and make the world believe that our positions are reversed. No, it is best as it is. I have arranged with the lawyers all that had to be done, which was very little; and now Mrs. Penrhyn can have everything her own way.’

‘You are a coward, after all,’ said Mrs. Bradshaw. ‘I should have given you credit for being able to make a better fight.’

‘But what for? What is the use of fighting when there is nothing to be gained?’

‘Except power, which we women always so dearly delight in.’

‘I beg your pardon. It is precisely because I have the power that I don’t want to exert it, still less to make a show of it——’

‘But, my dear friend, there is more in show than you think for. The world is governed by it. As the Psalmist says in that verse which strikes me more and more every time I come across it, for its wonderful knowledge of human nature and human life, “So long as thou doest well unto thyself, men will speak good of thee.” If you claim power for yourself it will be yielded; if you give it up, it will be disputed and at last taken from you.’

‘Be it so,’ I said. ‘I really care too little about it to contend for it.’

‘Very well, then. Remember you will have nothing to complain of when you find your stepdaughter and her worthy grandmother carving out life in their own fashion and totally ignoring you.’

‘What is there to carve?’ I said, looking up in astonishment.

‘What is there not to carve? Beauty, grace, amiability, and a pleasant little fortune for pin money on the one hand; and the Worthington estates, and the heir apparent on the other. Viscountess Hopeton, Countess of Worthington! a most exciting prospect for your sweet Ina.’

I laid down my work in disgust. ‘Really,’ I said, ‘you are too bad. I don’t think well of Mrs. Penrhyn, I confess, but I give her credit for something better than that.’

‘Better, my dear! what could be better? Besides, you yourself, if my memory does not fail, entertained the suspicion some time ago.’

‘Yes,’ I said, ‘it did come into my mind, but I scolded myself for it.’

‘You would have been wiser to scold Mrs. Penrhyn. and if such an idea presented itself then much more will it do so now.’

‘No,’ I said, ‘begging your pardon, there is an especial reason why it should not do so. Lord Hopeton has grown up an unutterable dunce, totally unworthy of Ina; and everyone knows that his character at Oxford was very far from satisfactory. He is just the very last person whom Ina ought to marry, putting aside what is in my mind a grave objection, the difference of position.’

‘A baby! a mere baby in long clothes,’ said Mrs. Bradshaw patting my hand, ‘but I won’t argue with you, only just remember one thing, that when the world has by universal consent pronounced a certain dictum, we may be tolerably certain of being in the wrong if we go against it. The world says that for a woman to marry a man above her in rank is not to be objected to, to marry one below her is. You would never make Mrs. Penrhyn or Mrs. Anyone else believe you were in earnest in ob-

jecting to Ina's marrying Lord Hopeton, because she is not quite his equal in birth.'

'No,' I said, 'I should never make anyone believe it, I know that quite well. But it is not the less true.'

'And you mean that you would actually bring it forward as a difficulty?'

'I would not bring it forward in the case of a real attachment, but I would act upon it so far that I would not put Ina or any other young girl in the way of temptation. In this case, though, I don't believe it would be a temptation. It is impossible that Ina should care for a man like Lord Hopeton.'

'Only she may care for his coronet,' said Mrs. Bradshaw, in an undertone. 'Forgive me for being so persistent. Besides I don't recognise your objection.'

'You don't think it objectionable then for a girl to be cut off from her early associations, to be placed in a circle where she is never likely to meet them, and where the old tendernesses and kindnesses are almost necessarily forgotten? Now, I do. Life, under the best of circumstances, is hardening, but to cherish the affections and sympathies of childhood tends to counteract the evil, it keeps the heart gentle and unselfish.'

'Possibly you are right, and I know you always had a Utopia of love in a cottage for your girls.'

'My dear friend,' I said, 'I have really had no Utopia at all. Marriage is just one of those things which I feel must be left in God's Hands, it must be as He wills.'

'Precisely what I have not the least doubt Mrs. Penrhyn says when she brings the "dear Worthingtons" continually upon the *tapis*, throws the young people together, talks of and praises them to each other, and in fact plays Beatrice and Benedick with them, intending all the while when they rush blindfold into each other's arms,

to draw back, and lift her saintly eyes to heaven and exclaim,—how Providential ! And she will take the world in, my dear, and you too. You will all believe it Providential.'

' Shall I ?' I said, doubtingly.

' Yes, you will, because you won't believe my word now. You won't face facts as they are. It is the greatest fault I have to find with you. Why won't you look at Mrs. Penrhyn as what she is—a scheming, manœuvring, worldly old woman, with no more truth in her than is required to make her falsehood pass current with her fellow-creatures ?'

' I do look at her in that light when I am obliged to do so, but as it is not a very pleasant sight I shut my eyes to it when I can. She has been civil to me lately, and kind to Ina, and I want to make the best of her.'

' And she patronises John Penrhyn because he has taken a first class, and is quite courteous to Mr. Neville and Marietta because they have five thousand a year. Success, my dear, success, that is the secret of it all !'

' There is no success in my case,' I said ; ' I am neither more nor less than I was when she first knew me.'

' Oh ! but Mrs. Penrhyn never wastes her neglect. She will always be civil when she has no motive for being the reverse, and you know you have kept out of her way of late.'

' Yes, I have only been there once during the last three years, and that only for two days.'

' Exactly, and she thinks she has conquered, and can have everything her own way ; and she will have it. It is an unpleasant prophecy, but she will, unless you exert yourself to oppose her.'

' I wish you would tell me how,' I said.

' Well, don't be shocked. But if you wish Ina not to marry Lord Hopeton, you should put her in the way of marrying some one else.'

' No,' I said, ' that I will never do.'

‘Hush! quiet! you start like a horse touched by the whip. I don’t mean that you should choose any particular individual, and then throw your child in his way, in the hope of attracting him; that would be simply fighting Mrs. Penrhyn with her own weapons—and very miserable and unworthy ones they are; but I do mean that you should send her about into the world a little more, and give her the opportunity of seeing more people. For the last three years you have kept her here, with only the change of a visit to Arling, and, of course, if she thinks about anyone, it must be some person connected with these two places; she can have no interest beyond.’

‘That is true,’ I said; ‘but I have been so anxious about her. And you know Ina;—you know what there is in her which, with all my efforts, I have never been able quite to root out.’

‘Yes. She is not transparent, she dearly loves a little mystery; one sees it written in her face—sweet face though it is; but you won’t do any good (forgive me for lecturing you) by keeping her tied to your apron-string. I am convinced that a girl of her character will profit by nothing but her own experience, and the best thing you can do is to give it her in some safe form; whether Arling is safe of course you know best.

Just for the moment I felt a little irritated, and I dare say my face showed it.

‘There!’ exclaimed Mrs. Bradshaw, ‘I have done wrong. I knew I should. I am the worst person in the world to try a winding lane in order to reach to my point. It is against my nature, which teaches me to ride a steeple-chase, and get to it quickly. ‘Now, listen.’ She drew out a letter. ‘This, you see, is from Charlotte Anson, of whom Ina speaks—a good-natured gossiping woman of five-and-thirty, and it is written to my little daughter-in-law, Marian. They have lately struck up a friendship,

in the hope, I suspect, that two heads with half an ounce of brains each, may be found as useful in life as one head with a whole ounce.' Mrs. Bradshaw scanned the closely written, illegible, and partly crossed epistle. 'Dated, you see, from Worthington Hall. Now then.'

'We all go to Arling to-morrow, to keep Ina Anstruther's birthday. Mrs. Penrhyn gives out that she is an heiress, and so there are to be great festivities, and I daresay we shall all enjoy ourselves very much. But if I were Lady Worthington I should be disgusted at the way Mrs. Penrhyn goes on, really throwing Ina at Lord Hopeton, and making such a fuss about the family—evidently with a purpose. It is marvellous to me that they don't appear to see it; everyone else does. It would be a very unsuitable marriage in point of connection, and I should have thought the Worthingtons would have been the last persons to entertain the idea; but a friend of theirs, who knows a good deal of the ins and outs of their affairs, says that the real fact is, that Lord Hopeton is such a scamp, that if his mother can only get him married to any respectable and well-bred girl she will not care who it is, for she thinks it will be the means of keeping him out of mischief. And so Ina Anstruther is to be sacrificed. Poor girl! I should pity her; only she seems to take to the flirtation very kindly.'

Mrs. Bradshaw laid down the letter, and waited for my comment.

'Well!' she said, at last, seeing that I was not inclined to speak.

'Not well at all,' was my reply. 'Of course Ina must come home at once. My dear friend, forgive me for being cross, but I have blundered, and in a grave matter. That is enough to make one cross, at least with oneself.'

'The gossip may, or may not, be true,' said Mrs. Bradshaw; 'but I felt it was right you should know it.'

‘Yes, unquestionably, and I blame myself greatly. I could not have helped the present state of affairs—I mean, I could not have gone to Arling now; but I know I have yielded to my distaste in times past, and seized upon excuses to stay at home, and Ina has been left too much to her grandmother’s influence.’

‘Never too late to mend,’ said Mrs. Bradshaw, kindly. ‘The festivities will only last one day, and matters will scarcely proceed at so very quick a rate. Mr. Neville and Marietta come to Woodleigh next week. That will be an excuse for having Ina home; and she has plenty of sense; and when she has been a few weeks in the society of a man like Mr. Neville, she will be less willing to tolerate Lord Hopeton.’

‘Except that she can marry the one, and she can’t marry the other,’ I said.

‘That does make a difference; but still there is a great deal in seeing what a man can be, as well as what he ought to be. A hearty respect for a first-rate man raises the tone of a woman’s mind, just as much as respect for a woman raises a man’s.’

‘It is what Ina wants,’ I said. ‘She sees so few men.’

‘Precisely. Henry Anson is really the only young man in the place—not reckoning the Westford strangers.’

‘And at one time,’ I said, ‘I had a misgiving as to him. It was just after we came from abroad, and when he had been so bitterly disappointed about Marietta. There was a kind of mutual understanding between Ina and him then which I did not quite like.’

Mrs. Bradshaw laughed. ‘But, my dear, why not? One would think that you meant to keep Ina from all profane eyes and turn her into a Sister of Mercy. She might go farther and fare worse.’

‘Still I should not like it. Henry Anson is a good young man in his way, but he is not superior; and I don’t

fancy my child's coming in in that way to make up for a disappointment. At any rate, I am glad there is nothing in it.'

'On her side,' added Mrs. Bradshaw; 'on his I should not be so sure.'

'Poor silly young man!' I said, 'he has always a little love affair of some kind on his hands.'

'Very naturally. Sir John grows old. Lady Anson preaches to him that it is his duty to marry, and Mrs. Harcourt still presents the fair Lydia to his unwilling acceptance. What can he do in the midst of such persecution, except nourish a little private romance for his own special entertainment?'

'I plead guilty to a very naughty feeling,' I said. 'I should delight in Ina's refusing young Anson. Lady Anson has behaved so badly to me.'

'Looking at it in that Christian point of view, there would be greater delight in her accepting him,' said Mrs. Bradshaw. 'It would spite Lady Anson more.'

'Ah! but my pride comes in there. I could not have my child thrust into a family unwillingly.'

'Very natural. Yet I really hope that if ever the opportunity presented itself, you would not allow either pride or spite to stand in the way.'

'I hope not, if Ina's happiness were concerned; but that is all wild talking. They have gone on safely hitherto. If they had meant to fall in love they would have done so long ago.'

'You forget that Henry Anson was not heart-whole for the first year after you returned from Spain,' said Mrs. Bradshaw. 'I don't believe, indeed, that he really got over his feeling for Marietta till last autumn, when, if you remember, he was staying somewhere in the north, and went to Chilhurst for a few days. Then I think he began actually to realise that it was all over.'

‘He may have suffered,’ I said; ‘but my sympathy in all that matter went to the Rector.’

‘Yes,’ replied Mrs. Bradshaw, ‘an attack of love, like whooping-cough and measles, should be had early, if people mean to recover from it. At the Rector’s age it may be fatal. I shall take care to be out of the way when I know the first meeting is to take place. I don’t like to see a poor innocent dumb creature suffer.’

‘Sadly irreverent, still,’ I said, laughing.

‘Not at all—only truth-speaking. He is innocent—you can’t deny that; and it would be much more irreverent—in fact, it would be scandalous—to call him anything else. And dumb—yes, you and I both know that he is quite dumb where his feelings are concerned. If he had not been, he would have spoken his mind to Marietta long before you went abroad; and ten to one she would have listened to him.’

‘Never!’ I exclaimed.

‘Indignant or virtuous, which?’ inquired Mrs. Bradshaw, ironically. ‘Yet I again say, ten to one she would have listened to him. If possession is nine points of the law, declaration is nine points of love—I mean, of course, with women. If ever it should be my fate to give counsel to a man who has the disease, I should certainly say, “Speak—never mind being refused—speak.” A woman is a monster who is not softened by the knowledge that a man cares for her, and even if she should say “No” at first, there will almost always be an opportunity for a second attempt.’

‘Henry Anson spoke to Marietta, and met a refusal, once and for ever,’ I said.

‘Yes, because at the very moment her heart was given to some one else. One can’t in these matters provide against all accidents.’

‘And Marietta,’ I continued, ‘liked Mr. Neville from

the very beginning of their acquaintance—so, at least, I suspect; therefore I don't see when and how the Rector could ever have had a chance.'

'What! not before Mr. Neville came, when he was paying all those devoted attentions at the time of the Woodleigh troubles, making himself Marietta's sole guardian and protector, and even buying up her diamond locket to help her, or rather to help Mrs. Randolph, in a difficulty!'

'How do you know that?' I said. 'I fancied it was so, but I never knew it for certain.'

'Because you are not like me, you never ask questions. I did ask, not from mere curiosity, I hope, but from a wish to save Marietta unnecessary sacrifices, and Cairn, the jeweller, told me. He, himself, took the locket ostensibly, but it was with the understanding that the Rector was to have it afterwards.'

'And the Rector gave the locket back to her then?' I said.

'Not he, poor man! He never dared. I suspect he waited till he could offer it with his love. Anyhow, that, and a hundred other delicate little kindnesses have been all wasted upon her. She has never understood them.'

'Ah! well!' I said, with a sigh. 'It is a very perplexing and heartaching world, and that is the best one can say for it. There is no joy but is purchased by a sorrow.'

'Query whether without sorrow we could know joy?' said Mrs. Bradshaw; 'but I don't want to go off into metaphysics. Here comes one who looks as if the very element of her existence was joy. You had better marry her to the Rector. I believe she would turn his grey hair into black again.'

At that moment Essie came rushing up to us, a basket on her arm, full of treasures gathered on the shore—seaweeds and sea-anemones, a star-fish and a sea-urchin, with

various other wonders having very unpronounceable names, but which she has lately taken it into her head to become acquainted with. Her very bright blue eyes sparkled with delight; and certainly, with her mass of rich auburn hair, turned off her face and caught in a net behind, her clear forehead and straight nose, her transparent complexion and brilliant colour, she did look very attractive; and I doubt if anyone would have been inclined to complain even of her rather large mouth showing a row of beautiful pearly teeth. The exuberant buoyancy of her spirits, the merry tones of her voice, and the laugh, which always sounds to me like the echo of a festival bell, form always a marked contrast to Agnes. I could not help saying to Mrs. Bradshaw as they came up, 'You would scarcely take the two for sisters.' 'No,' was the reply, 'except for a certain family likeness. Agnes, you know, is my ideal of a nun, and I think it is a great pity you don't make her one at once. That very delicate pale face, the chiselled features, as artists and poets call them, and the soft eyes, which look as if they were made of crystallised tears, would do so well set off by a nun's coif. And you may be sure the child can never be happy in this wicked world. She was not made for it.'

'So you and I say,' I answered; 'but then possibly we may know nothing about it. And one fact is against us—she has evidently been sent into it.'

Mrs. Bradshaw was going to reply, but the children—I must call them children still, though Agnes is seventeen—came near and interrupted us.

Essie was pressing forward to exhibit her wonders first, but Agnes gently touched her shoulder, and Frances and Anna Bradshaw were put forward instead.

'Yes, yes, all right!' was Essie's exclamation; and she laid aside her own basket, and took out the strange crea-

tures collected by her little friends, and which they seemed half unwilling to approach.

‘Agnes says they are uncanny, mamma, and Anna says they are crawley; but ar’n’t they beauties? Just see this crimson one, and the darling little purple, and this huge monster—the largest of all—and such lovely little crabs! Frances will have as good a collection as mine now, and I am to go and teach her how to keep them fresh.’

‘We must hope Mrs. Bradshaw will take a fancy to the creatures, too, Essie,’ I said.

‘Oh yes, but I know she will, she is so kind—dear Mrs. Bradshaw!’ and the rather brown hands which had been busy with sand and sea-weed, were upon the point of being laid entreatingly upon Mrs. Bradshaw’s collar, when Agnes again interposed—

‘Stop, Essie, such dirty hands!’

‘To be sure. I forgot. I shall go and wash them. We will all go and wash our hands; and we will put the creatures into the large glass vase, and bring them into the drawing-room. Mamma, darling, you don’t mind, I know you don’t; it shall be on the side-table. We won’t make any mess. Ar’n’t they beauties?’ And Essie ran off, followed by Fanny and Anna.

Agnes sat down on the grass. ‘Mamma, may I stay just a few minutes with you?’

‘Tired, little woman?’ said Mrs. Bradshaw.

‘Only a little—not very,’ replied Agnes. ‘Essie would make us hunt for the sea-anemones, and that took us a long time and a long way, and it was so hot!’

‘You should have sat on the shore,’ I said, ‘and sent them to search. You know, you can’t do as much as Essie.’

‘But I thought she would take Fanny and Anna too far, and Mrs. Bradshaw said she trusted them to me.’

‘My dear little conscientious idiot!’ said Mrs. Bradshaw,

‘please to remember that duty is a good horse, but it is cruel to ride it to death.’

‘Only Agnes never thinks it possible to ride duty to death,’ I said ; ‘do you, darling?’

‘No, mamma ; because if one did, it wouldn’t be duty, but something else.’

‘Precisely, child,’ said Mrs. Bradshaw ; ‘that is what you have to learn ; and who is to teach you, I don’t know.’

‘Experience,’ I said.

‘Not you, mamma?’ asked Agnes, looking up wistfully.

‘No, dear child, it is one of those things which can’t be taught, it can only be learnt ; because, you see, teaching involves the giving of rules, and they involve the necessity of knowing beforehand all the circumstances under which they are to be applied, and that is an impossibility. I am afraid, Agnes, you must learn to be your own guide.’

‘A sorrowful prospect, little nun,’ said Mrs. Bradshaw.

‘No,’ said Agnes, quietly, ‘not sorrowful ; but it makes one think.’

‘And thinking makes your cheek pale and your face thin. Sea-urchins are better than thinking, take my word for it, Agnes.’

‘Yes, if one could like them as well,’ said Agnes, laughing ; ‘but they are uncanny—everyone must own that—and so slimy ! And the great anemones swallow the little crabs.’

‘And that is hard-hearted,’ said Mrs. Bradshaw, ‘though we do eat legs of mutton every day, and think ourselves very badly off when we can’t get them. Ah ! well, Agnes, it is what I said three years ago, you must have a little world for yourself.’

‘In which there shall be no sea-anemones,’ I said.

‘ Oh, mamma! no, no!’ exclaimed Agnes. ‘ Of course I know it is all right, and very wonderful and beautiful, and I do admire them, and I always help Essie to search for them; but I like to sit on the shore and watch the waves better. One can’t help one’s tastes.’ She started up. ‘ And now I must go into Woodleigh and see if the gardener has put the flower-beds in order for Mr. Neville. Marietta wrote especially to beg that might be done.’

‘ And now you shall go in and rest,’ I said, ‘ and Mrs. Bradshaw and I will go into Woodleigh. We have been sitting here lazily all the afternoon, and there will be just time for you to rest, and for us to walk, before tea.’

‘ Dear mamma! always thinking of me,’ said Agnes, ‘ and always tiring yourself!’

But when I repeated that I had had no walking, she assented, and Mrs. Bradshaw and I strolled into the kitchen garden, and went through the once locked gate into the Woodleigh grounds.

Many tenants have occupied Woodleigh since the time that Mrs. Randolph left it, and it was sold. Some have been pleasant, some the reverse; but there have been none with whom we have made any very intimate acquaintance. The place is a good deal changed, and in a way which I fear Marietta will feel. It has not the trim look which a house and grounds under daily supervision naturally acquire.

And Marietta has never seen it since her marriage. She and Mr. Neville were abroad with Mrs. Randolph for a year after their marriage; that is to say, Mr. Neville came occasionally to England, but their head-quarters were at Cannes, where Mrs. Randolph died. When, after that, they came to settle in England, they were obliged to go at once to the north, and little Cissy was born; it was winter, and Marietta was not strong: and in this way ob-

stacles to our meeting have perpetually interposed, and it has been heart-sickening and disappointing; for I have had a great craving to see her, and so has Ina; I should say, also, so has Marietta longed to see us, if I did not feel that she must have had such very engrossing interests apart from us. Her letters are just the same, but they are fewer than they were. At first she wrote every week, now I hear about once in two months; but that is natural. I cannot help thinking she must be changed, yet she seems to retain all her feeling for us and for Dernham and Woodleigh generally. She has quite set her heart upon coming to Woodleigh; and I want her to feel that the place has been cared for, though she has no longer any direct interest in it.

Mrs. Bradshaw and I strolled about the garden, and wandered through the rooms, moralising, and yet keeping upon the surface. One never ventures to go deep when touching upon things connected with the dead. Praise seems presumptuous, and censure hard; but I could not help recalling—as I do almost involuntarily whenever I go to Woodleigh—the curious train of slight circumstances which have combined to weave the web of Marietta's lot so closely with my own. And thinking of her and of Mr. Neville brought back to me Ina's mention of Frank Neville and his report of Charlie, which somehow had not made much impression upon me till I read the letter a second time. I discussed it with Mrs. Bradshaw, and she promised to talk of it to the Colonel. I should be very much afraid of the army for Charlie as a profession, but still it is useless to fight against decided tastes, and it would be folly to throw away money upon a University education if, after all, it is to come to nothing. The great point to be decided will be whether it is a wish for one profession, or a longing to escape from another. Yet it can scarcely be the latter, for he knows I should not urge his taking

orders unless he had a decided bias in that direction. He might be a barrister, if he chose.

We had a merry tea, and some games with the children afterwards, and then Agnes and Essie sang duets to us till they must have been tired, though we were not ; and we ended with one or two hymns—the ‘ Evening Hymn,’ and that beautiful ‘ Abide with me,’ which always carries me back to Pau, and the death-chamber—with my darling, looking, longing, for the glimmering light which was to be to her the morning dawn of Paradise. How present it all is to me again ! Yes, indeed, as Hood says, ‘ She had another morn than ours.’

I came to my room soothed after that. I had not been soothed during the day ; I had been too earthly. One does so hate oneself for talking of love and marriage and being settled in life, and all that kind of thing, just as if one thought it the sole object of existence, and as if it had no connection with anything beyond this world. And it is untrue and unreal to do so. When I say that Mr. Anson is not superior, I mean really that he is not religious, that he is quite contented with the present life, that he thinks, so far as I can judge, but little of another, and that his chief aim seems to be that of making himself easy and comfortable. Why does one shrink from saying this ? Why should one wrap one’s thoughts in cotton, so that no person can tell what they are like ? I always detest myself for it, and yet I know I do it very often, even with the friends I love best, and who I am sure would understand me.

CHAPTER XXIII.

June 8.—A letter from Marietta. They hope to be here on Tuesday—five days hence, and three days earlier than we expected. That gives me an excuse for writing at once to Ina, and begging her on no account to delay her return. I do not think, when she is once safe under my wing, I shall be inclined to let her leave me again. Yet there may be some reason in what Mrs. Bradshaw says—that I am inclined to keep her within too narrow bounds, and that I ought to trust her more. Really and truly I do trust her, up to a certain point; but still—it may be the effect of former impressions, it may be that there are some lingering remains of the old fault—I never can feel perfectly safe and happy about her, because I never feel perfectly sure, when she asks my advice, that there is not some little incident, or thought, or feeling kept in the background, which, if I knew it, would give a different turn to my judgment. And every now and then, Essie, who is bluntly true, bursts out with an exclamation of surprise at something Ina has said, or done, or taken for granted, which shows me that she, like myself, sees, or rather feels, that there is cause for misgiving. I don't think Agnes perceives it. She lives so much in the clouds, I doubt whether she is quick in reading character; and she idealises those she loves, which Essie never does.

And yet Ina is religious. I don't doubt that; but she is self-deceived. It is a great puzzle. How, if we are religious—really bent upon serving God—can we, any of us,

be blind to our faults? How can one person indulge vanity, and another pride, and another a bad temper or indolence, without actually being aware of it? I confess I do not know. It is just as great a mystery to me as any of the marvels of science; but it frightens one about oneself. I quarrel with Agnes sometimes for her perpetual introspection, and no doubt it is morbid, and often tends to obscure instead of discovering faults. But really when one sees what people may be, and are, who apparently have no self-knowledge, it makes one feel that too strict self-examination must be a fault on the right side; I mean, of course, when it is carried on by a comparison with the one highest standard of all goodness; otherwise, no doubt, it is useless. To enquire whether we are acting up to what we think right is of secondary importance; the primary question is whether what we think right really is right. In the confusion of these two queries lies, I suspect, the root of all self-deceit.

June 11.—A day of visitors—most fatiguing—and I had a good deal to worry me besides. Charlie writes about this new notion of going into the army, and I cannot at all see my way to it. I must put the matter aside till I can talk to Mr. Neville. Mrs. Penrhyn writes to protest against Ina's coming home. Ina does not write at all, which vexes me. Mrs. Penrhyn says:—

Arling, June 10, 18—.

‘MY DEAR MRS. ANSTRUTHER,—You will not, I hope, be disappointed at finding that I have a little difficulty in acceding to your request for dear Ina's immediate return. She has been with me such a very short time that I am most unwilling to part with her, especially as, judging from past experience, it is not likely that she will soon be spared to me again. At my age, also, it is presumptuous to look forward; I can but enjoy the present moment with thankfulness, leaving the future in the hands of the All-

Wise Orderer of all earthly events. And, therefore, when I have the happiness (so rarely granted) of having my dearest Cecilia's only surviving child with me, I am naturally unwilling to relinquish it, except from some important claim of duty. In the present instance, I confess I do not see that this claim exists. Mrs. Edward Neville is, no doubt, anxious to renew her friendship with my sweet Ina, and as there are now no objections to the intimacy, I should not interpose any obstacle to Ina's return on that account; I merely state my own wishes, and, I may add, those of my daughter, and, I believe, of Ina herself. There are some little festivities in the neighbourhood, to which she has been invited, and which she would be unwilling to lose. To-morrow is to be spent at Worthington Hall, and, as the engagement is of long standing, it would be impossible to break it without rudeness, especially as the entertainment is to be chiefly in Ina's honour, and is, in fact, another celebration of her birthday. The two following days are also marked by social festivities, and Ina will then require rest. You see, therefore, that it would be out of the question for her to travel for another week, or, at any rate, before next Thursday. I can only hope that Mrs. Edward Neville may be persuaded to remain a little longer in your neighbourhood, and that my dear Ina may have a full opportunity of enjoying their society.

‘Believe me, dear Mrs. Anstruther, with our united kind regards to yourself and your family circle,

‘Very truly yours,

‘MARIA PENRHYN.’

Really Mrs. Penrhyn is a most irritating woman. She will not interpose obstacles to the renewal of Ina's friendship with Marietta!—of course she will not, because she cannot. But she delights in exhibitions of would-be

authority. And then her assertion that it would be out of the question for Ina to travel for another week ! It is a difficulty interposed without any object but that of saying no ; for I never expected that Ina could come before Thursday ; I never thought of bringing her back at a moment's notice, and that was why I wrote at once, so that she might be ready in time. But there is no use in dwelling upon these worries : the fact is, we neither of us hold the position we did. Ina is now legally her own mistress, and the important question for the future will be, not which of us she is to obey, but which she is to listen to. That engagement at Worthington Hall is suspicious. Time was when Mrs. Penrhyn's grandchildren might have lived and died, and Lady Worthington would scarcely have acknowledged their existence ; now, with an object, it is very different. Yet I can understand and appreciate Lady Worthington if she is anxious to secure a quiet, well-principled wife for her scapegrace son. But Mrs. Penrhyn ! I must not let myself think of her ! she makes me uncharitable. And Ina will, I trust, be at home on Thursday.

My visitors were here all at the same time, which was tiresome. Lady Anson and her second daughter, Edith, came first. Lady Anson has not called for three months, and made some rather awkward apologies, which I took in perfectly good part. One can't be much offended with persons one does not care about. The Fowlers from Easthope were announced directly afterwards, and old Captain Shaw. The latter I really did wish to see and talk to ; but the confusion was trying to his deafness, and I was obliged to leave him. Agnes came in and did her very utmost to help me, but hers is such an extremely shy age ! She and Edith Anson sat and looked at each other at first like two frightened hares ready to start at a moment's notice. Edith made no effort to say anything to anyone, but Agnes

really did, and when she could extract nothing from Edith she turned to Miss Fowler, and I heard her say, quite in an audible voice, 'What an extremely high tide there was yesterday!' When the Fowlers went she crept round to Captain Shaw, and the old man petted her, as he always does, and promised to give her his photograph, and then she was happy and at her ease; but I could not help being amused at the evident working of her conscience after a time. I believe it never gives her a moment's rest. She was so uncomfortable because Edith Anson was silent; and there were such very decided efforts made to draw her into the conversation, but they failed; Edith Anson can only talk when with her own little clique, the Harcourts and their friends. Lady Anson thought to please me by saying in an undertone that Agnes had grown very pretty; but I am afraid I don't like personal remarks (and remarks upon one's children are personal) from people who don't know how to behave civilly. I was much more conciliated when she spoke of Miss Humphreys, the little dressmaker, and said how ill she looked, and asked if I knew anything about her. That was a matter in which we could have a common interest; for Lady Anson really is extremely benevolent, and would forgive even me my delinquencies if I would but have a dangerous illness. She asked after Ina, and said she had heard of her from her niece, who was staying at Worthington, and she believed it was arranged for Miss Anson to travel with Ina, as they were both coming to Dernham next week. She spoke as if I must know all about it, and I was obliged to confess that I knew nothing; at which Lady Anson looked surprised, and remarked that she supposed Mrs. Penrhyn took those little arrangements into her own hands. Something also was added about Henry Anson, but what it was I could not quite make out, for just then Captain Shaw asked me some

question which diverted my attention; but I am nearly sure Lady Anson said either that her son had been at Worthington, or was going there. I should not have thought of it afterwards, but that, when Lady Anson was gone and Agnes was out of the room, the old Captain said to me in his quaint, faltering, earnest way—

‘My dear madam, there is trouble, I fear, lowering over our good friends at the manor. Sir John looks very much shaken.’

‘Ill, do you mean?’ I said.

‘Yes, weakened, I know not from what cause, but it must be evident to his family, though they do not speak of it. I could wish that our young friend Henry were married. It would be a satisfaction to his parents when looking forward to a change.’

‘Perhaps,’ I said, hastily, as the idea flashed across my mind that Lord Hopeton had a sister—‘perhaps, he is gone away to look for a wife now, but I am sorry to hear you speak in that way of Sir John. I had noticed that he had not been at church for the last three or four Sundays, but I did not know that there was anything serious the matter, or I should certainly have asked Lady Anson about it.’

‘You have done well not to ask,’ was the reply. ‘I inquired yesterday after I had seen Sir John, but Lady Anson did not like it. I should not have known there was so much amiss, but that I had occasion to see Sir John on some magistrate’s business, and, though I was admitted to the library, and had a satisfactory interview, I could not but be struck with his looks. And he was very feeble—strangely feeble. He is ten years younger than I am. Ah! dear madam, it makes me say, Why do I still cumber the ground?’

He stood up to go; Agnes came in from the garden just then, bringing a specimen of a new kind of creeper

which I gave her in the spring, and which has been blossoming in front of the cottage. She and Captain Shaw are great horticultural allies. He took the flower from her and examined it, and gave it a long botanical name; but his thoughts were absent, and, as she looked at him with an air of slight disappointment, he said—

‘Yes, little maiden, it is very beautiful, but I trust to see others more so before long. Yet the angels who tend them will scarce be fairer or dearer than the angels of earth. God bless them!’ And he laid his hand upon Agnes’ head.

Her sweet little face was upraised to his, and he bent down and kissed her. As they stood together, they were an exquisite picture of holy age and youth.

The old man went away almost directly, and Agnes and I came back to what we are accustomed to call the atmosphere of everyday life—to the mists, in fact, which shroud reality.

CHAPTER XXIV.

June 14.—They are here at Woodleigh. They came last evening. I went to Woodleigh to receive them. Marietta is looking precisely as she did when we parted at Barcelona, not a day older. She is just as impulsive—just as sunshiny, and loving, and enthusiastic. Marriage does not seem to have sobered her in the least—I suppose because she did not want sobering; only there is a pretty matronly dignity and pride when she talks of her child. She was vexed that Ina was not here, but quite understood that their change of plans had been the cause. And Mr. Neville—he really is very much altered, he is grown so much younger—I could almost say so much less cynical, but that I do not think he ever was a cynic at heart. At any rate, he has come down to the level of ordinary mortals; though I see a few traces of the old tendency to dogmatise and keep the world in order, when he scolds his wife for having so much to say that she does not let him put in a word. I stayed with them really shamefully late last night, considering they had had quite a long journey, but we had so much to talk about. Marietta bears old reminiscences better than I expected she would. She has a happier feeling connected with her aunt from having been with her that year abroad, when Mrs. Randolph really, I believe, became very much more what Marietta longed to see her. Woodleigh now reminds her chiefly of her first acquaintance with us. Victor, Mr. Neville tells me, is growing a fine boy, and is

kept in excellent order by his great uncle. He was allowed to be abroad with his mother for two or three months latterly, and was with her when she died. As for Lady Chase and the Baron, no one seems to know anything about them, except that Mr. Neville says he thinks he saw the Baron once in Paris, looking very poor and disreputable.

I asked about John Penrhyn, and Marietta was willing enough to talk about him; but with Mr. Neville I found it was rather a sore subject; he never can quite get over the sense of having unintentionally done the young man an injury. This I understood when talking to Marietta alone; and I confess to having rather an uncomfortable feeling myself when I find upon what he grounds this idea. I never knew till now that old Mr. Neville's fit was said to have been brought on by worry of mind about John, of whom he was excessively fond. John's refusal to go home when he was recalled from Madrid, added to the reports which were spread, worked upon the old man's mind, and caused him to alter his will; and distress at being, as he thought, called upon to do this brought on his illness. But, as Marietta explained to me, things might possibly have been different if John could have reached England in time to see his uncle and tell him exactly how matters were. The delay of the few days when we were at Valencia, and he was wasting his time at Barcelona, prevented this. Mr. Neville blames himself for it; though, as Marietta says, she has shown him again and again that he acted for the best. He thinks that perhaps the longing to be with her influenced and blinded him to what was a duty. As to that, however, if anyone is to blame I am, for if I had spoken out at once, and told Mr. Neville at our first meeting where John was, and what had passed between him and the Baron, I believe he would have started for Barcelona

instantly, and sent John home. I do not feel, however, that I am called upon to repent of what I did, simply on account of a result wholly unforeseen.

Perhaps, though, if I had profited by the train of events as Mr. Neville has, I might have more misgivings as to the right and wrong of my conduct. Marietta tells me that at first Mr. Neville wished to make some great sacrifice for John—to give up to him, in fact, a large portion of the property; but John would not hear of it. He accepted three hundred a year, that he might finish his career at Oxford, and then he set himself to study immensely hard, and has done wonders. Even Mr. Neville owns that the disinheritance has, in its effects, been the best thing which has ever happened to him.

I spoke of Mrs. Penrhyn and her forgiveness of all past offences in consideration of John's having taken a double first class, which amused Marietta extremely; and I gave Ina's report of him as being uncommonly pleasant.

'Yes, he is fascinating, quite fascinating now,' said Marietta; 'just as clever, and amusing, and simple as ever, and so good—really good; Edward quite approves of him.'

'And what do you do, my dear?' I asked. 'I should like your own opinion; or do you only see with your husband's eyes?'

'I try to have eyes of my own,' said Marietta, laughing; 'but you know it is difficult when one lives with ——' she paused.

I finished the sentence.

'Anyone so very perfect as Mr. Neville.'

'Well! yes, it may be very foolish, but I do think him almost perfect, and I have had nearly four years' experience. As to John, you will be able to judge for yourself, for we have asked him to come and stay with us whilst we are here.'

These few words, which passed just before I left Wood-

leigh, have suggested a new subject for thought, and not entirely a pleasant one. John Penrhyn may be an angel, but I don't want to have him here with Ina. He is Henry Penrhyn's son, and I can never forget the warning given and the promise made.

June 15.—A most enjoyable day. I had Marietta all to myself in the morning, or at least after I had finished lessons with Essie, and she and Mr. Neville dined with us early (he is really a very obedient husband, and succumbed without a protest to the early dinner); and then, when it became cool, we all went down to the shore. To-morrow I suppose the Westford and Dernham world will think it right to call on Mrs. Edward Neville, though they looked a little askance on Marietta Randolph.

Mrs. Bradshaw told me beforehand that she should not come the first day, and the only person there seemed a chance of seeing was the Rector, but he did not appear. Agnes is perfectly charmed with Marietta. She was such a child in former days that she was unable to recognise all there is to admire and love in her; but now I see the dawning of that girlish romance for a woman older and wiser (especially where there is anything like beauty) which is so common at Agnes' age, and which really is, I think, upon the whole, a very good thing. Esther's delight is the little Cissy, who can just walk alone, and say a few words. Last night she was so sleepy that I could only look at her in her nurse's arms; and afterwards, when she was lying in her cot, her soft round arm and her little hand half hiding her flushed cheek, and when she certainly looked bewitching. To-day I am not sure that I think her quite so pretty; she has her father's high forehead, which is rather too high for such a mite, but the eyes and mouth are Marietta's; and the way she puts up her face to be kissed has just

that air of Italian impulse and unreserve which adds to Marietta's attractions.

Esther carried her off to a distance, and, with the help of the nurse, built up a castle on the sand for her, whilst we were so engaged in conversation that we did not notice what went on; at least, I did not, until, turning round, I saw the little thing toddling away by herself to meet a great wave which was just coming in. I screamed out, though I don't think there was anything really to be alarmed at, as the nurse went after her directly; but before she could reach her, a gentleman came round the point, and, catching the child up in his arms, brought her up to Esther. I saw then that it was Mr. L'Estrange. He said a few words to Esther, and looked towards us; but I am nearly sure he was half inclined to turn back. Marietta, however, recognised him, and with an exclamation of, 'Oh, there is the dear old Rector!' ran forward to meet him. Mr. Neville and I followed more leisurely. The Rector's manner was stony. One might have thought that he was speaking to a person, not only indifferent to him, but absolutely disagreeable, and poor Marietta was chilled to the heart. She glanced, first at him, then at me, and tears gathered in her eyes.

'You have nearly forgotten me, I am afraid, Mr. L'Estrange,' she said, attempting to laugh.

'Oh no! on no account; how could it be?'

He did not know in the least what to say, and I tried to help him, and made matters worse; for I observed to Marietta, 'that I could answer for it that Mr. L'Estrange had never forgotten her.'

I had no particular meaning in my words. I uttered them by that kind of fatality which seems to make one every now and then say precisely what one ought not to say.

The poor Rector coloured like a culprit, stammered out

something about congratulations, and offered to shake hands with Mr. Neville, who, having his attention engaged at the instant, did not respond. The Rector then drew back his unshaken hand, looked round at the sea as though he would fain have thrown himself into it, and wished us good evening.

‘He is ill or unhappy,’ said Marietta to me, as we walked on along the sand.

‘Both, perhaps,’ said Mr. Neville; and, as our eyes met, I saw that he understood the truth, though Marietta did not.

Marietta could not recover herself. She referred to the subject again and again. One of her pleasantest anticipations, in coming back to Dernham, had been, she said, the thought of seeing the Rector. He had been such a real, true, kind friend to her; and in some ways he knew more about her than anyone else.

‘Perhaps he knows too much,’ said Mr. Neville, laughing, ‘and so wishes to withdraw from the acquaintance.’

‘I suspect he is awkward in recognising your new position,’ I said. ‘He is not accustomed to think of you as a wife and mother.’

‘Yes, it may be; but still—’ Marietta stopped, for we had just then turned the point, and came again suddenly upon Mr. L’Estrange.

He was seated on a rock, his back towards us, and on his knee sat Cissy, playing with his watch-chain, Esther and the nurse standing by. His head was bent down over her. She was attracted by his whiskers, and leaving the watch-chain, pulled at them vigorously. The nurse tried to interpose, but the Rector motioned her away, and then, drawing the little thing closely to him, he kissed her, not once or twice, but again and again, with the impulse of an eager, passionate love, and at length, laying her down half-frightened upon the sand, strode up a path-

way which led to the top of the cliff, and was speedily out of sight.

We watched him for a few seconds, after which we turned round and walked home silently.

I think even Marietta then had her eyes opened. She did not mention the Rector's name again during the whole evening.

CHAPTER XXV.

June 16.—Ina came yesterday ; Miss Anson—Charlotte Anson—with her. I had a letter in the morning telling me that so it was to be, but Mrs. Penrhyn has kept me till the last moment in ignorance as to how she intended to arrange the journey. Ina is looking tired, and is not quite in good spirits ; I try to attribute it a little to the change which she must feel has taken place in her intercourse with Marietta. It is absurd to say that marriage makes no difference in the relations of family and friendship. It must make a difference, the greatest—it was intended to do so. That which has been first must from thenceforth be second, and the alteration cannot but be painful. I feel it to a certain degree myself. I am not, in every respect, what I was to Marietta, for she has another to advise her. But there was no romance in our affection,—that was reserved for Ina, and it is she therefore who has lost the most.

I question, though, whether this is really the cause of her bad spirits. I have watched her carefully, and do not see that there is anything like impatience at Marietta's very evident devotion to her husband. Ina seems to take it as a matter of course ; and though this is sensible, it is not quite natural. I should be better pleased if she cared more about it. We have talked a good deal about Arling, and the festivities, and the Worthingtons—as Ina will call them—and she appears quite open about them, and speaks of Lord Hopeton as a weak young man, who has been spoiled

by home indulgence. I cannot imagine that she cares in the least for him ; but I suspect there must be some idea of his caring for her, for she betrays unconsciously, in the course of conversation, how much he was at Arling, and tells me that Lady Worthington asked her to spend a few days at the Castle, and that she should have gone but for the recall home.

‘What did your grandmamma say to your refusing the invitation?’ I asked.

‘I never told her that it had been given,’ was Ina’s reply. ‘I did not want to have a fight about it, and I knew I ought to come home.’

She said this hurriedly, and turning away, began to talk about something else. I should not notice these trifles in Agnes or Esther, but with Ina any appearance of reserve unconsciously makes me uneasy, because I never know what may be hidden beneath.

Charlie and Hugh come to-morrow, then we shall be all together. I have not had time yet to talk to Mr. Neville about Charlie ; in fact, I don’t think I should do so, at any rate, till I have heard from Charlie himself what this new fancy is. How one does long that one’s children would say out everything they have to say to oneself, instead of talking to other people ! But I suppose it is not to be expected ;—one is too deeply interested. Chance words and light words become grave earnest when they pass between parent and child.

Marietta has had many visitors to-day, Henry Anson among them. He came with his mother, I suppose, to show that by-gones are by-gones, for Mr. Neville told me afterwards that he was in excellent spirits. Lady Anson also called on me, and brought her niece to see Ina. Charlotte Anson has more in her than any other Anson I have yet seen. She and Ina were excellent friends, and appeared to have a good many recollections in com-

mon. I found from their conversation that Henry Anson had been staying some time at Worthington, and it struck me as strange that Ina had not said more about it. I fancy there must really be some matrimonial project going on which Ina is not allowed to mention. I enquired for Sir John, but Lady Anson would not even allow he was ill, and immediately changed the conversation. This is the most cordial visit I have ever had from her. Marietta has had many invitations, but refused them all. Next week, though, we are all to go, a family party, to Beechwood.

June 18.—A characteristic note from Mrs. Bradshaw this morning.

‘MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have been measuring the length of my dining-room table, and find that, allowing twelve inches for each individual, we shall precisely fill the table, and leave four over. Who are the four to be? We elders can’t afford to sit at a side-table, and so lose our dignity, it would be such a bad example in this age of irreverence; the grown-up young ladies won’t do it, because, having only lately acquired their honours, they will object to being deprived of them; and the little ones must not do it, because they will infallibly create such a disturbance that the police will be called in to suppress it.

‘Alas! that I have no saloon capable of accommodating my guests;—nothing but a passage, four feet wide, with a slight expansion at the extremity, which my excellent Hannah calls “the ’All, ma’am,” but which certainly could not contain you all. What am I to do? You will say, Why did you invite us? My dear, I have said it to myself, Why did I invite you? I ought to have known, though it is at least forty years since I was at school, that the less cannot contain the greater. But, you see, having made the blunder I must abide by it. I should break

my heart if I did not see Marietta and Mr. Neville; I should lose the ornaments of my table if Ina and Esther were not present; and, as for the boys, I have been looking forward to their noise for the last fortnight.

‘No, there is no alternative; you must come, but it must be only to migrate further. What do you say? A picnic at Headington Castle?—Plenty of space there; ghosts too—splendid sea-views, and woods close at hand. Ina and Agnes both sketch, don’t they? Best of all, a quiet corner in which you and I can have a *tête-à-tête*. Don’t make difficulties—there are none. I provide the means of transit; it is only seven miles off. I have not been there for years, and I believe the road is insufferably bad, but jolting will be good for us; life grows too easy for old people like you and me when we always sit by our chimney fire. We shall have Charlotte and Edith Anson, too, and Henry and the Rector. Having been in Spain, you will appreciate an *olla podrida*; it will be an easy way of showing them all attentions, which I feel bound to do. I don’t like the plan. I hate picnics. I would much rather have you alone in my own little den for a pleasant cose over the fire. But there are duties to society; I have the greatest possible idea of them. I look upon you in the society point of view now, and you must come. I promise you two things: first, that there shall not be fourteen veal pies, because I intend to take the commissariat department into my own hands, and to provide everything myself; next, that there shall be no need for sky-blue parasols to keep off the inevitable picnic deluge, because we will dine in one of the old empty rooms, and if the deluge should come, the young things shall play at hide-and-seek. I thought of music, but it won’t do; unless—well! we won’t anticipate. I don’t know in the least how I am to get through the day, though my dear little simpering Marian turns to her husband and says, “Only think, Tom, won’t it be delicious?” But it is to

be got through somehow; and you are to be there, and "that's true, and no mistake." A slice of true love to be cut up and distributed. Send a piece to Marietta, and give her dear, excellent, stiff-cravated, donnish husband a taste. Don't contradict me; I choose to call him a don, and it disturbs my conviction of my own powers of discrimination to be told that he is not one.

'Yours very affectionately,

'C. B.'

Of course we must go, and I daresay it will be the best way of managing the affair. Headington, curiously enough, I have never seen, though people say that there is a good deal of interest about it. At any rate, it will give us shelter, and there are really lovely views near. I shall be very glad to have the pleasure for the boys, and especially as Frank Neville is here. Charlie wrote at the last moment to beg that he might bring him with him for a fortnight, and I could not possibly say no, though I had looked forward to having my boys for a little time entirely to myself. They all came yesterday. The house is very merry, and Esther especially is half wild with glee. Agnes often creeps away to Marietta. I have given Esther a month's holiday. Regular irregularity I find to be much more safe for all parties than an attempt at work which cannot be carried out. But I beg that there may be steady indoor employment of some kind or another for an hour and a half every morning. I held a counsel with them all yesterday, and put it before them whether this would not be a wise plan, leaving it to themselves to decide what they would do. I find that now they are so fast approaching years of so-called discretion, it is desirable to train them in the use of that valuable article, and help them to feel that they really do possess it. One is so apt to think that obedience to oneself is the great end of education, whereas it is only a means to a much higher end—

obedience to the supreme law of right, necessarily involving the principle of self-government.

Frank Neville is really a charming boy—gentlemanly and intelligent, and full of spirits—more like Hugh than Charlie; and yet he still holds to Charlie as his friend.

I find I must keep a little watch upon Essie; her spirits are apt to run away with her. She delights in being with boys, and now and then she allows herself to go a little further than I like, in the way of noise and freedom. Charlie is annoyed, I can see—he is so very fastidious—but Hugh leads her on; for they have always been playfellows, and he looks upon her as being still seven years old, whereas, in fact, she is nearly thirteen. I don't think Essie ever could or would be in any way *fast*—the thought of it would be odious to her; but she is likely to acquire rough awkward habits and ways and tones, which it will be a great trouble by-and-by to correct; and then will come fretting, and irritation, and coldness—one sees it perpetually. Mothers sow neglect, and then wonder that they reap disrespect and ill-temper.

Hugh is vastly improved—much more steady and willing to work. He gives me less anxiety than Charlie, who, with his mental indolence and ultra-refinement of taste, is likely to become a mere selfish man of the world, unless he can soon be stirred up to some nobler ambition. One thing pleases me, though—he is so extremely attentive to his sisters. I hope that may be because, when they were very little children, the boys were never allowed to make the little girls wait upon them, but were compelled to be courteous to them, and to respect them, by never saying rude or improper things before them. I think I never in my life punished Hugh so severely as I did about four years ago, when I found he had been repeating some coarse school rhymes before Esther; I believe I made him heartily ashamed of it.

CHAPTER XXVI.

June 20.—John Penrhyn came yesterday, and is to stay at Woodleigh, I believe, till Marietta and Mr. Neville go back to the north. I don't quite like it, but, as I cannot prevent it, I must needs make the best of it. And I do not believe there is any fear of Ina's losing her heart to him; for again and again, from little things I see and hear, the suspicion arises that she is not heart-whole, and that there is something going on behind the scenes. It makes me very uncomfortable. Yesterday I was talking to Agnes about a little present she wants to make Marietta, and *à propos* to it, she said, 'Oh, mamma! have you seen the beautiful brooch which Lord Hopeton gave Ina on her birthday? She had lovely presents from everyone, but I think that was the prettiest of all.'

I had seen some of the presents—a dressing-case from Mrs. Penrhyn, a book from Aunt Bessie, another book from Mrs. Huddersfield, a set of beautifully carved chessmen from Lady Worthington, but I had not seen the brooch from Lord Hopeton. I changed the subject with Agnes; but when I was alone with Ina I said carelessly, 'My dear, you did not show me Lord Hopeton's brooch the other day when I was looking at your presents. Agnes says it is the prettiest of all.'

'Oh! did not I show it, mamma? I'—she was going, I believe, to say, 'I forgot,' but she stopped, and ran upstairs, and brought the brooch down—a very handsome one—gold, with a circle of emeralds.

I admired it, but then I said, 'I don't think it was quite the thing to receive a present of this kind from a gentleman.'

She coloured a little, but answered lightly, 'There was nothing in it, it was all public. Everyone was giving me presents, and so Lord Hopeton asked if he might, and grandmamma did not object.'

'I am afraid I should have objected,' I said; 'it seems to me rather taking a liberty.'

'But when he asked first, mamma? surely that made all the difference.'

'Yes, it made a difference in a certain way. Still I should not have allowed it. You are not old friends; and, if you were, Lord Hopeton is not the kind of person——'

Ina interrupted me. 'Oh! he is a mere nobody, so very dull. I couldn't endure him, only he is so good-natured.'

'And why, Ina,' I said, trying to smile, 'did you not show me the brooch the other day? Come, confess, you did think that I should not quite approve.'

'Well! darling mamma'—and she kissed me—'you know you are a wee bit particular, and I don't like to worry you. And, indeed, I had no choice in the matter. The thing was arranged with grandmamma, and I had nothing to do but to say, "Thank you."'

'A little coward still,' I said; 'not liking to own anything which may possibly be found fault with.'

'Perhaps so,' and Ina smiled with the most charming sweet temper. 'I mean to be brave some day; but I always think there is no good in worrying people about trifles which can't be helped; and, as I had the brooch, you see I could not return it.'

I sighed inwardly, and said no more. I felt that Ina would not bear it. That she accepted the brooch is her grandmamma's fault; and I could be indignant with Mrs.

Penrhyn, if it were not that it is just what I should have expected. What really troubles me is the proof which this matter gives that Ina can still keep things back, that she is still not absolutely open. There is nothing so wretched as suspicion; and yet an act of this kind unavoidably awakens it. I go over again and again in my own mind what Ina said, and how she looked, when we talked of Lord Hopeton. There was not the slightest appearance of shyness or self-consciousness; her manner was simple and natural: but there is something behind; I feel sure there must be.

Happily for John Penrhyn, I don't think he is just now inclined to fall in love with Ina or with anyone; his mind is full of India and his profession. He has taken a fancy to Charlie, and Charlie to him, and I can see that he is likely to get hold of Charlie's real wishes better than anyone—better even than Agnes, who worships her brother so much that she spoils him. She was saying to me to-day that John Penrhyn pooh-poohs the army, and tells Charlie that he had far better try for the Indian Civil Service. My poor little woman was inclined to be frightened at the Indian climate, but I reminded her that Charlie might, very likely, be sent to India if he were in the army. I do not dread the climate myself: I think it would suit Charlie; and I should be thankful for anything which would give him definite and regular employment, which the army certainly would not. But I try very hard not to let my own wishes bias me in any direction; and I do pray very earnestly that we may all be guided to a right decision in the matter. Agnes longs for him to take orders. I should long too, if Charlie desired it himself; but, of all fatal mistakes, that of urging a young man to become a clergyman against his will is the most fatal.

June 22.—After finishing the lessons this morning, I went over to Woodleigh, to have an hour's work and chat

with Marietta. John and Mr. Neville were gone out, and little Cissy was asleep, so there was no fear of interruption, at least so we thought. Marietta began talking to me about Ina, saying very much what I had thought about her.

‘She is not happy, and it makes me so sad,’ she said, in her earnest way, ‘and I do hate Mrs. Penrhyn. Ina never was right in the old days after she had been at Arling.’

‘Ina won’t be right, my love,’ I said, ‘till you, or I, or some one, can make her open the windows of her heart and permit us to look in. There are a good many things there which she does not choose to see herself, and does not like anyone else to see; and if you can induce her to be more open I shall be infinitely grateful.’

‘Oh!’—and Marietta shook her head—‘my spell is over. She fancies I shall tell my husband. She said so yesterday. As if—wasn’t it a horrid notion?—as if Edward would wish or care to know what was told me in confidence by another person. I have only to say to him, “I can’t tell you,” and then he never troubles himself again. But Ina won’t believe this. I could not love Edward, I could not respect him; and he could not respect me, if we did not trust each other.’

‘That perfect trust is not in Ina,’ I said, sorrowfully.

‘But she can trust Miss Anson now,’ said Marietta. ‘I am not jealous, I love too well; and Ina was first with me years ago, and there are things past which one cannot forget, so that no one else can take her place; but I did think when she said yesterday that she had been writing a long note to Miss Anson, and that it was a pleasure to find some one who quite understood her, that it was strange in her to say it to me.’

‘Ina does not tell me of her correspondence with Miss Anson,’ I said.

‘I daresay it is not a correspondence exactly,’ exclaimed Marietta. ‘And please, please don’t think I want to complain or make much of it. But, you know, I came to Woodleigh expecting—well, it was foolish, I daresay—I am changed, everything changes—but I forgot that Ina could make new friends.’ Her eyes filled with tears.

At that moment appeared Mr. Neville and John Penrhyn. Mr. Neville came up to Marietta and was going to speak, but he saw directly that something was amiss, and gently laying his hand upon her head, with a half caress, he hurried away and addressed himself to me.

‘I have a message for you from Mrs. Bradshaw,’ he said; ‘I met her in the village. She is purveying for tomorrow and the picnic, and wants knives, forks, and spoons. I promised a carving knife and two broken forks, but really there is not much else in the house: never was a place so miserably furnished with such things.’

‘A wonderful woman that!’ exclaimed John Penrhyn; ‘she seems to have come direct from the *Palais de la Verité*. She told me plainly that I was one too many, and she had no place for me, and I half suspect she meant it.’

‘Of course she did,’ I said; ‘Mrs. Bradshaw always says what she means.’

‘The advantage of which is, I suppose,’ continued John, ‘that she keeps a clear conscience, and yet conceals her real meaning just as much as if she spoke falsehood.’

‘I don’t understand,’ said Marietta.

‘Only,’ replied John, laughing, ‘that in this world, truth being so rare, no one interprets his neighbour’s words according to their literal meaning; and so truth, after all, does the work of falsehood. When Mrs. Bradshaw tells me I am one too many, I take it as a flattering acknowledgement that she is delighted to see me. Ordinarily, you know, a person would not say such a thing if it was meant.’

‘That Miss Anson—Charlotte Anson they call her’—said Mr. Neville, ‘is somewhat in Mrs. Bradshaw’s line, I suspect, to judge from her jacket.’

‘Strong-minded?’ enquired John.

‘Now, I won’t allow that,’ I said. ‘Marietta, I appeal to you: Mrs. Bradshaw is not strong-minded.’

‘Well, no; Edward, you must not say naughty things. Mrs. Bradshaw has been always so excessively kind to me.’

‘Very kind, and very odd,’ said Mr. Neville.

‘Odd—so far as that there are very few people half as good, or half as pleasant,’ I replied; ‘and if Miss Anson resembles her, I shall like her immensely.’

‘But Miss Anson does not resemble her,’ said John. ‘Mrs. Bradshaw is a tall, rather large——’

I interrupted him. ‘I don’t like my friend’s portrait drawn by a sign-painter: take Miss Anson instead.’

‘Impossible! I only saw her for a moment just now, as we came in at the gate.’

‘What! is she coming here?’ exclaimed Marietta, starting up. ‘It is just luncheon time.’

‘And we have only provisions in the house for small appetites,’ said Mr. Neville, ‘and Miss Anson looks as if she could—Marietta, why do you stop me?’

‘Share a goose with you, and regret that there was scarcely enough for two,’ said John. ‘A genuine daughter of Britannia.’

‘But is she really coming?’ enquired Marietta in alarm.

‘You dear, little, anxious housekeeper!’ said Mr. Neville; ‘no, she is not coming, at least not just now. I left her at the gate with Henry Anson and Ina; and she is gone off now down the village, to find Mrs. Bradshaw, and promise more knives and forks.’

‘Then is Mr. Anson coming?’

‘No, no one: don’t distress yourself. Ina asked them both to have luncheon with you,’ he added, turning to me.

‘Then you must go back!’ exclaimed Marietta. ‘How excessively provoking! This is almost the first day we have caught you.’

‘I don’t see why you should go back,’ said Mr. Neville. ‘They seem to me very decorous, proper behaved young people, and Miss Anson must be quite old enough for a chaperone.’

‘Eight-and-twenty, and I take the consequences,’ said John, ‘as a friend’s governess stated at the last census.’

‘Eight-and-twenty or not,’ I observed, ‘it is scarcely civil to have luncheon with you, when I have friends at my own house. I confess I am rather provoked.’

‘And, after all, I would not answer for it that they will be there,’ said Mr. Neville. ‘I heard Ina ask them, but there was a demur, and then Miss Anson went off. Suppose we send a message over to the cottage to inquire into the luncheon programme.’

The message was sent, and the answer came back: ‘Miss Anson might, perhaps, have luncheon at the cottage, but it was uncertain.’

‘And not a word about Henry Anson,’ observed Mr. Neville; ‘so you need have no conscience scruples; and it is a very good thing to accustom Ina to do the honours.’

‘She understands that by instinct,’ I heard John Penrhyn say to Marietta in a half aside. He had a curious smile upon his face, and I could not feel thoroughly sure that he meant it as a compliment, except that he was too much of a gentleman to have meant the reverse.

We had a very pleasant merry luncheon, Marietta giving us some of her experiences of the north. She is so struck with the independent roughness of the people—such a contrast to her early Italian associations. John has

never been in the north since his uncle's death. He had a cordial invitation to Chilhurst now, which, however, he only half accepted; for he is to be called to the Bar almost immediately, and then his destination will be India. He speaks cheerfully and hopefully of his prospects. One could never imagine that he had had such a great disappointment in life, much less that Mr. Neville had been, in a certain sense, a successful rival. They are both of them essentially generous-minded. Sometimes, when I amuse myself with the very useless speculation as to the different characteristics of men and women, I am tempted to think that women cannot compete with men in the virtue of generosity and large-mindedness. One can only judge from one's own experience; but certainly I have known men forgive and forget with a nobleness which I have in vain looked for in women; though I am very partial to my own sex, and always inclined to stand up for them.

I went home about four, Marietta with me: we were to walk into Westford in the evening. We left Woodleigh by the avenue and the lodge, which I never pass without recalling Mr. Randolph's awful accident. Marietta is bent upon buying back Woodleigh and coming here regularly in the summer, and she is already looking at everything with an eye to the possible future. To-day she went off into an exuberant outburst of prospective delight—exhausted natural epithets, and coined unnatural ones; for whenever she is very much excited, she forgets her English, most fluent and perfect though it is generally: but the sight of the lodge at the end of the avenue recalled the trials of the past, and with a sudden change of tone, which at the instant quite startled me, she was in the depths of sorrowful reminiscences of her uncle, and those sad hours of watching, and of her aunt, and the Spanish journey, and Mrs. Randolph's last years of suffering. If

I were to put down the words as they were uttered, it would seem impossible that there could be any reality either in the joy or the sorrow which so rapidly succeeded one another. But the tone of voice and the moistened eye were conclusive as to their genuineness. As we came in sight of the lodge gate our thoughts were diverted into a new channel, for Cissy and her nurse, Sarah, were standing there. I thought the nurse was talking with some one, and when we drew nearer I saw it was Mr. L'Estrange. He has been at Woodleigh more than once since that first meeting on the shore, and has, I am sure, tried hard to respond to Marietta's first advances, and put their intercourse upon its old footing; but it cannot be. He is still constrained, and Marietta cannot but see it. To-day he did not see us coming—he was so engrossed with the child, who is quite devoted to him. The nurse put her down to walk, and the little thing toddled up to him without the slightest shyness, and then he took her up, and sitting down on the bank, began to talk to her. We stopped and watched them for a few minutes. Presently the Rector spoke to Sarah, and I thought he took something out of his pocket, and there was a little fuss, in some way connected with Cissy, but I could not see what it was; and as we drew nearer, and the Rector glanced round and saw us, he almost tossed the child to the nurse, and walked away.

Sarah brought Cissy to us. The little creature looked quite excited, and pointed to a small velvet bag which was hung round her neck.

'Mr. L'Estrange gave it her, ma'am,' said Sarah; 'but he told me I was on no account to let her look into it, unless you were by.'

Marietta was going to open it directly, but I prevented her.

'Suppose we take Cissy with us to the cottage,' I

said. 'Then we will see what there is in the wonderful bag.'

Sarah, I could perceive, was greatly disappointed; but Marietta, who is extremely quick at accepting a hint, agreed directly, and we led Cissy away, highly delighted at having to walk between Mamma and Auntie, as she calls me.

'It may be as well to look into the bag before we go into the house,' I said, as we entered the cottage garden. 'The Rector evidently desires to be mysterious, though he blundered, as no one but himself could have blundered, by letting Sarah into his secret, supposing it to be one.'

Cissy opened her large eyes to their widest extent, in expectation; but the bag contained only a little sealed card-box, on the outside of which was written—'*For Cecil Marietta Neville, on her eighteenth birthday.*'

'It must be a locket!' exclaimed Marietta, hastily opening the box.

'It is *the* diamond star,' I said, as she took out the wool in which the ornament was wrapped. 'Do you remember the scene in Cairn's shop? He bought it then, I know.'

Marietta started. 'Impossible! Cairn never told me! and—why?—'

She stopped and coloured.

'Dear child,' I said, 'you, of all persons, are the last who need ask why? Accept the fact that he loved you, and give him gratitude and friendship in return.'

'And can you think,' exclaimed Marietta, passionately, 'that I don't give them to him? Oh! if he could but tell!' and she clasped her hands earnestly. 'Next to Edward, there is not the man on earth I care for as I do for him. But gratitude! it is such a poor return for love.'

'Yes, very poor; but friendship is not—at least, not such friendship as yours. Don't draw back from him, Marietta.'

‘That is what Edward says,’ she replied; ‘but I feel as if it must be a mockery to show him kindness which he cannot value.’

‘But which he will value infinitely by-and-by. The pain will lessen in time. And remember he is very lonely.’

‘Don’t think I need to be reminded of it,’ she exclaimed; ‘I think of it only too often, and now it makes me miserable.’

She paused; we were entering the house.

‘Which way did he go?’ she said.

‘Towards the school. I think he turned in there.’

‘Then Cissy shall go with me to thank him;’ and she caught the child up, and hurried down the garden.

I tried to stop her, for it was too much for her to carry such a burden; but she would not listen. I watched her till she was out of sight, and then I went into the house.

The first sight that greeted me in the drawing-room was Ina, with a portfolio of photographs and drawings, which she was exhibiting to Mr. Anson and his cousin Charlotte. Agnes and Essie were also in the room, at another table: they were the first to see me.

Miss Anson came forward and made an apology, in a very pleasant way, for having taken possession of my house in my absence. Henry shook hands with the cordiality of an old friend, and said, how delightful it was to be carried back to his foreign tour. Ina asked me some question in a perfectly simple unconstrained way. No one seemed to have the slightest idea that there could be anything which could have given me annoyance.

I sat down and turned over the photographs with them, and we talked a good deal, and Miss Anson made herself extremely agreeable; so much so, that I quite forgot how time was running on, till we heard the five o’clock bell, which rings when the village school is over, and then Miss Anson started up, declaring that we were perfect mur-

derers of time ; we were so very pleasant that the afternoon was gone before it had begun. She had a hundred things to do, and only time for fifty.

‘ Then you won’t walk into Westford with us ? ’ said Ina.

‘ No, not to-day, thank you ; but we shall meet to-morrow. Mrs. Anstruther, you won’t mind my driving Ina over to Headington in the pony-chaise ? I have settled with Mrs. Bradshaw that it is so to be, if you don’t object.’

‘ A pony warranted to stand from sunrise to sunset,’ said Henry Anson.

‘ Just what we don’t want it to do,’ exclaimed Ina.

‘ But, mamma dear, you won’t be afraid ? ’

‘ If Lady Anson is not, I suppose I need not be,’ I replied.

Miss Anson renewed her assurances that the creature was the quietest of the quiet, and that she was an experienced charioteer ; and a little more conversation passed about the hour of meeting, and the cousins departed just as Marietta came back from her interview with Mr. L’Estrange.

She looked very happy, and yet rather grave. I could ask her no questions, neither could I say anything to Ina. We walked into Westford. Conversation was carried on about ordinary matters till, as we were returning home, Agnes carried off Marietta, and I found myself alone with Ina. Then I asked how it was that Miss Anson and her brother were so domesticated at the cottage.

‘ They had luncheon there,’ was the answer.

‘ But you said nothing about Mr. Anson when you sent back your message to me,’ I replied.

‘ Did I not ? Oh ! I remember ; I was uncertain about them both.’

‘ But when you knew that I was not coming back, you ought not to have asked him to stay, my dear Ina.’

‘I was not sure you were not coming, mamma; and something had been said about it before, and it would have been very awkward. I am extremely sorry.’ Ina’s tone was rather proud.

‘There is not much to be sorry about, my love; only, another time, be a little more exact in your messages. If you had said that, perhaps, both Mr. and Miss Anson might stay to luncheon, I should have understood, and should have come back.’

‘But, mamma, that would have been a thousand pities. You know, there could be no harm in their just having luncheon with us.’

‘Not the shadow of harm, dear child, but I should have preferred being at home. So another time, please, be more particular.’

That was all that passed, but it left a disagreeable impression on my mind, not quite effaced even by the smile on Marietta’s loving true face, as she said to me when we parted, ‘I took Cissy to the Rector, and made her kiss him, and say, “Thank you, I love you very much;” and then I told him that I should teach my child to treasure his present, not only from old reminiscences and his great and rare kindness, but from the feeling that he was one of the very dearest friends I possessed.’ Marietta’s voice trembled a little as she added, ‘When I said this, his eyes actually glistened—those strange, stern eyes—and he muttered, in a low tone, “I was afraid you might refuse it. God bless you for accepting it!” And then we grasped each other’s hands, so long that I felt almost ashamed; and now we are dear friends for ever.’

‘Yes, for ever,’ I said, earnestly, ‘in the world where there will be no barriers to love.’

CHAPTER XXVII.

June 23.—How one repeats again and again, ‘Thou knowest not what a day may bring forth!’ yet never realising what the words mean.

Yesterday we had the picnic at Headington—all seemed bright and prosperous. The party met at Mrs. Bradshaw’s, just those whom she had named—the Ansons, Mr. L’Estrange, the Woodleigh party, and ourselves. Ina was in remarkably good spirits. Miss Anson called for her in the pony-chaise, and they drove off together; and I was very well satisfied; but I was not quite pleased when we reached Beechwood to find that the pony was pronounced rather too much for Miss Anson, and that a proposition had been made for Mr. Anson to drive, and for his cousin to take the back seat. It would have been awkward for me to interfere and prevent it; in fact, it was all arranged before I was told of the change; but it just made me uncomfortable, because I had the faintest possible suspicion that there was a little purpose in it. I did not suspect Ina, but I did suspect Charlotte Anson; for I noticed a meaning smile pass over her face when Henry Anson assisted her to mount into the back seat—a smile which seemed to say, ‘I have been successful.’ She is a very good-natured merry-hearted woman—I really can’t call her a girl; and I fancy from what I have heard of her that, when she is not occupied with her own flirtations, she is with those of other people. Not a good friend for Ina! and I felt this still more as the day wore on.

The drive to Headington was lovely, through wooded lanes leading near the coast, so as to give us perpetual peeps of the sea. But the lanes were very narrow and extremely rough. The large carriages would have been in an awkward predicament if we had met any waggons or carts. We drove but slowly, and the pony-chaise had the opportunity of getting on a good way before us. John Penrhyn and Colonel Bradshaw were on horseback, the boys on ponies. They all took a short cut. The rest of us disposed of ourselves, *ad libitum*, in the old-fashioned barouches, which are still used in this part of the world. Marietta took the Rector with her, and was very kind to him ; but I suspect her sweet words and sweeter looks are torture to him still, and yet he can never resist them.

Headington is a grand old castle. I had no idea before how grand. It stands on a high cliff, looking over the sea, the walls and the rock forming one foundation ; the sweep of a fine bay backed by wooded hills is to be seen on the right ; to the left, and immediately behind, the ground rises still higher than the castle, so that, for purposes of defence, I suppose, it must now be nearly useless. Agnes was delighted with the prospect of a sketch—for she has a decided taste for drawing—and arranged with Edith Anson, the moment they arrived, to go in search of the best point of view ; the boys, and Essie, and Marian Bradshaw, with her two little girls, rushed away on an exploring expedition. As for everyone else, I don't know what he, she, or it did ; for my mind had two occupations—one, that of helping Mrs. Bradshaw to give orders for dinner ; and the other, that of speculating what had become of Ina—for she was not to be seen. The pony-chaise, we were told by the porter, had arrived with a gentleman and two ladies, but we looked about for them in vain. Mrs. Bradshaw laughed at me for what she called my prudery, and declared that if I kept such a strict

watch over Ina she would surely some day run away from me ; and this made me feel a little ashamed of my fidgetiness, but I cannot say it removed it.

The interior of the castle has been, in cases of emergency, used for barracks, and in one of the barrack-rooms we were to dine. It was a large dismantled dreary-looking place, but it was all the better for that ; it gave the gentlemen something to do to put it in order, and they were sent about in every direction to provide chairs and tables, and made to unpack the baskets, and, in fact, do a large portion of the domestic work ; and very amusing it was to watch how their different characters came out under this new phase of employment. John Penrhyn, full of life and eagerness, carrying all before him, turning misadventures into jokes, and startling the Rector at every turn by some absurd exaggeration, and making him, I am sure, seriously doubt whether it could be right to laugh so much ; Mr. Neville, doing no great amount of work, but with his keen satire urging John on whilst keeping a perfectly grave countenance himself ; and the Colonel, with his military precision and matter-of-factness, really doing his own share of business, and taking half that of everyone else.

‘ He is the only one of them all who has both his feet planted on mother earth,’ said Mrs. Bradshaw ; ‘ and at a picnic, or in life, which, after all, is but a large kind of picnic, I am not sure whether that is not more useful than, like other people, having one foot in the moon. What is the Rector about ? actually going to dress the salad. My dear Rector, excuse me. I have a special gift for salad. I will see to that myself. My dear, I must not sit in the corner and talk to you anymore, or we shall all be poisoned.’

And off went Mrs. Bradshaw ; and I took the opportunity of mounting the castle steps to the keep, to determine for myself what had become of Ina. On the summit

of the castle I found the exploring party, who informed me they had seen all that was to be seen—a curious old chapel or crypt lately excavated, and a dark cell, said to have been used for prisoners sentenced to execution; and now they were impatient for dinner. Marian Bradshaw looked tired, and was vexed, I could see, at having been left by Miss Anson, whom she considered her particular friend. We went together to the edge of the castle wall, and looked down, hoping to see Miss Anson.

‘There she is,’ said Marian, pointing to a figure seated on the turf far below. ‘Just by the bush. Don’t you see? And there is Ina standing by the wall.’

There were two figures certainly; and, though I was not intimately acquainted with Miss Anson’s dress, I could not mistake her tall gaunt figure. Henry Anson was not with them; so, after all, I had troubled myself for nothing. ‘I shall run down to them,’ said Marian, with childish eagerness; ‘they won’t know that dinner is ready.’

Hugh offered to go; but Marian had forgotten her fatigue and ran off, and the boys, fancying there was some new excitement, followed her. So I was left alone. I don’t know how long I sat there. My eyes travelled over the beautiful bay, and my thoughts travelled with them. The sea was a sapphire blue, clear and sparkling; and the waves, curled by the breeze, flashed in the sunshine with a joyous life, as I watched them. They seemed to infuse into me something of their own buoyancy. The burden of petty cares passed from me. I felt light-hearted, trusting, hopeful. From the sea I turned to the land. A road ran round the bay; I could trace it for at least a mile. A man on horseback was coming towards the castle, riding very quickly—so quickly that, for a moment, I thought his horse must be running away. But that was not so, he had full command of the animal,

only I supposed he was enjoying a gallop on the level road.

Just then Hugh came panting up the steps. They had found Ina, and everyone, and dinner was quite ready ; and I must, please, go down directly.

‘ Yes, in one minute ; ’ and I stood still by the battlement. Hugh came to my side.

‘ He rides fast, doesn’t he, Hugh ? ’ I said.

‘ Sir John would be very angry if he saw him, ’ said Hugh.

‘ Sir John ! my dear boy, what do you mean ? ’

‘ It is Sir John’s bay, ’ replied Hugh, who has become slightly conceited lately as to his horse-acquaintanceships.

‘ Why, Hugh, how absurd ! ’ I said. ‘ It is impossible for you to know a horse at this distance. ’

‘ But it is the bay, ’ repeated Hugh. He went near the edge of the battlement and leaned over ; ‘ and it is Sir John’s groom, too. ’

I stepped forward, but by this time the man, whoever he might be, had reached the little village which clusters round the castle, and the cottages hid him from our sight.

Hugh ran down the castle steps. I went after him slowly, thinking how glad I was that I had neither grooms nor horses to be anxious about.

There was a general outcry when I appeared in the dining-room. For courtesy sake, they had not liked to begin dinner without me, and they were all starving. Where had I been ? what had I been doing ?

‘ Looking for you, Ina, ’ I said, ‘ part of the time. ’

‘ Really ! ’ Ina looked up in surprise. ‘ I was in sight nearly the whole time. Miss Anson and I chose to sit on the turf outside, instead of scrambling over the wall. ’

‘ And Harry, ’ began Miss Anson. But what Harry did was not told, for at that instant a little girl—the porter’s

child—ran into the room, exclaiming, ‘If you please, is Mr. Anson here? He is wanted.’

Everyone turned round startled. Henry jumped up from his seat. ‘Wanted! what for? what is the matter?’ Sir John’s groom was standing in the doorway, he was pale, almost scared. Henry Anson caught him by the arm. ‘Speak! what is it? my father?’

‘Sir John has had a fit, sir, a bad one.’

‘Is he dead?’ asked Harry, in a sepulchral voice, which seemed to echo through the silence of the party.

‘He breathes, sir, but he is not conscious.’

There were some moments of complete bewilderment. I scarcely remember what passed; I only know that the poor young man was off before any of us, except Mr. Neville, could recover ourselves sufficiently to speak; and that a carriage was ordered to be got ready immediately to take Edith Anson and her cousin home. After that we all sat quite still and looked at one another for some seconds, till the boys clattered their knives and forks against their plates, and then Mrs. Bradshaw said we must eat our dinner; and the Colonel poured out a glass of wine for Edith Anson, and Charlotte made her drink it and take a biscuit; and after that we all did as we were told and tried to eat, till the carriage was announced; when the Rector and I went out and put the two poor girls into it, and the Rector insisted upon going with them; and I shrank back with a feeling of self-reproach for my seeming cold-heartedness, but with the conviction that any attentions coming from me would be unacceptable to Lady Anson.

And that was the end of our picnic! and yet not quite the end; for Ina was a good deal upset by the sudden shock, and instead of going round by the Manor to enquire for Sir John, as I had determined upon doing, I was obliged to take her home at once.

A note came for her in the evening, which she read out. It merely said, 'He is better for the moment; but the doctors tell us that it is only a question of time. My dearest, you will pray for me and for us all.' I was surprised at this expression of feeling and affection from Charlotte Anson, but Ina says she has a very warm heart.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

June 30.—Sir John lingers. The doctors even say that he may recover to a certain extent, though he can never again be what he was before. My own affairs have been sufficiently pressing to put the thought of those of my neighbours comparatively out of my mind. Charlie and Agnes have laid their two young heads together, and, aided and abetted by John Penrhyn, have come to me with an urgent request that Charlie should at once try for the Indian Civil Service. John proposes that he should for a time share a lodging with him in London, and study with a special tutor. Agnes—who, though she dreads India, has a still greater dread of the army—thinks that to be with Mr. Penrhyn must at once make the plan safe and easy; and I see that it is just that which may make it unsafe and uneasy. After all, though John is apparently steady now, I can't forget that he has been the reverse; and, even if it were not so, I am quite sure my husband would have objected, simply because he is John Penrhyn. If I could think of any other plan I should be vastly relieved, but there are difficulties every way. I thought of them all day yesterday, and should probably have continued to think all day to-day, if I had not had another subject presented to me.

There was a letter from Mrs. Penrhyn to myself this morning, and another, crested and coroneted, for Ina. When they were brought to me, I at once guessed the contents, but I gave Ina hers without making any

remark. Her cheek flushed, and she carried it off to read in her own room, so did I mine.

Arling, June 23.

‘MY DEAR MRS. ANSTRUTHER,—I could have wished that my present communication were to be made face to face. There are things which are so much better said in conversation than by writing; and we have, unfortunately, been such strangers to each other—though without any desire or intention on my part—that I fear you may not so entirely comprehend all that has taken place with regard to my dear Ina, as at once to recognise the leading of Providence in the circumstances which have brought about a proposal of marriage from Lord Hopeton.

‘Rank and wealth are, as we both know and own, merely sublunary advantages. They cannot for a moment be put in competition with the higher qualities of heart and intellect. And I confess that, looking at Lord Hopeton with a criticising eye, I cannot help perceiving that he is not in all respects the husband I should desire for my precious grandchild. I fear he has not always been as steady as he ought to have been. But this is the case with so many young men who afterwards turn out well, that I do not feel we ought to let it weigh in the balance against present good conduct and an undoubted reciprocal affection. Upon the latter point, I have no doubt. My dear Ina, though perfectly simple and retiring, could not, whilst she was here, conceal her feelings from an eye sharpened by affection. She will doubtless have shown you the beautiful brooch given by Lord Hopeton on her birthday, and received by her with a pleasure so manifest that it would alone have emboldened the young man to make his proposal. He spoke to me himself yesterday, and I gave him the encouragement which I deemed his due, by informing him that I had no reason to believe that Ina’s affections were otherwise engaged. Upon the strength of

this assurance he told me that he should immediately write. I do not of course know what he intends to say, but I send these few lines in order to satisfy you that on my part there will be no objection to the offer. As for dear Lady Worthington, she was so fascinated with my sweet Ina that I am certain nothing would delight her more than to receive the dear child as her daughter, and Lord Worthington is entirely of the same mind. So that, as far as we—the elders of the two families—are concerned, the affair may, I imagine, be considered settled. I really congratulate you upon such a happy termination to the onerous charge which you undertook when you married. Pray give my affectionate remembrances to your own children, and accept my best wishes for their welfare and for your own.

‘Ever, my dear Mrs. Anstruther,

‘Very sincerely yours,

‘M. PENRHYN.’

Could anything be more comfortably settled? My obligations to Mrs. Penrhyn are untold! But I sent for Ina. She had had full time to study her coroneted despatch. She came to me immediately, greatly agitated. I showed her her grandmamma’s handwriting, and said—

‘My dear child, you know the contents of this letter.’

She hesitated, and drew forth her own.

‘That is from Lord Hopeton,’ I said.

‘Yes, dear mamma: please read it.’

She leaned over my chair, partly, I think, to hide her face.

The letter was rambling and awkward, but through the intricacy of the sentences I gathered the usual declaration of devoted affection, accompanied by the assertion that the proposal had the full consent of the heads of the families on both sides; and an expression of great confidence in Ina’s feeling, founded upon the happy

intercourse of the last few weeks, and especially upon her acceptance of the brooch which Lord Hopeton had ventured to offer.

There really was no fault to find with the letter. The poor young man was evidently much perplexed, and his grammar was occasionally at fault; but a man in love is not to be expected to consider the exact relation between nominative cases and verbs; and the letter was honest and outspoken and humble. It gave me a better opinion of Lord Hopeton than I had entertained before, and I turned to Ina with great anxiety to see what effect it had had upon her.

‘Well! dear child,’ I said; and I took her hand fondly.

She knelt down by my side. ‘Mamma, you don’t think I could say, yes?’

‘I think you are expected to say it,’ I replied. ‘Listen to what your grandmamma says;’ and I read out the greater part of Mrs. Penrhyn’s letter.

Ina heard it impatiently. ‘Grandmamma has no right to say what she does!’ she exclaimed. ‘I don’t understand. “Undoubted mutual affection!” There is no mutual affection. It is as much as to say that I put myself forward, and showed it. It is a mistake, a great mistake.’

‘But the brooch was no mistake, Ina,’ I said.

She coloured deeply. ‘It was all nonsense, mamma. If you had been there I should have told you it meant nothing.’

‘If I had been there it would not have been accepted,’ I said; ‘and I very much doubt if it would have been offered.’

‘And you really wish me to marry Lord Hopeton?’ she exclaimed.

‘No, indeed, my child; God forbid, if he is such as I

believe him to be. But you must have given him encouragement.'

'I danced with him, and talked with him,' was the reply. 'I could not help it.'

'And with him more than with anyone else?'

'Yes, perhaps so, a little, sometimes.'

'And why, my love, if you did not like his attention?'

'Mamma, please, you are so very strict—if you had only been there. Indeed, I could not help it. And you know at last I came away because I did not wish to be obliged to stay at Worthington.'

Very true that was: and Ina was so evidently pained at the idea of my displeasure, that my heart reproached me for hard judgement.

'Your grandmamma will be very much vexed, and I am afraid very much surprised,' I said; 'but of course there is only one answer to be given.'

'Only one.' Yet Ina paused. I could not at all understand the expression of her face. It was unhappy and perplexed.

'You will find it difficult to write an answer,' I continued, thinking it was that which distressed her. 'But, my love, if you will take my advice, you will not think too much about it. Whatever comes to your mind most naturally and simply will be the best. And you must, in a certain sense, feel grateful to Lord Hopeton, and that feeling will help you.'

'It is not gratitude I feel,' said Ina, proudly. 'I could feel grateful if I respected him; but I don't respect him.'

'I can sympathise with you there,' I said: 'and yet, I suppose there always is something to be grateful for in the offer of a man's affection, let him be who or what he may. At any rate, you will be pained at being obliged to give him pain, especially when he is so little prepared for it.'

I was looking at Ina steadfastly as I spoke, and she turned away as though she could not bear my glance.

I put my arm round her and drew her towards me.

‘There is something behind, something that makes you unhappy, that I can’t understand, my darling: let me know it.’

Ina burst into tears. ‘Oh, mamma, if I might but tell you!’ she faltered. ‘You would forgive, no one else would. But you must not ask me.’

‘Indeed, indeed, I must,’ I said. ‘These are no childish matters. You must tell me, Ina. You are bound to do so.’

‘Oh no! mamma, I am not. I ought not to have said so much. But I am so afraid of grandmamma’s anger. And she has set her heart upon this, and it cannot be.’

‘Did she talk to you about it?’

‘Yes, in a kind of way, a hinting way, at first, which I could not help understanding; and at last——’

‘At last she spoke openly?’

‘Yes—that is not quite: but, I would never have taken the brooch if she had not insisted upon it.’

‘It was more, then, than a birthday present,’ I said, gravely.

‘It was given me on my birthday, with all the other presents. And no one knew there was any meaning in it.’

‘But there was a meaning. I do entreat you, dearest, to be quite open and clear. It will be impossible for me to advise you if you are not.’

‘Lord Hopeton had a meaning. Grandmamma told me he had.’

‘And she urged your accepting the brooch?’

‘Yes. She told me that it would make her so happy if I were to like him; and that if I took it I should give Lady Worthington pleasure; and that he had been so

very anxious to be allowed to offer it. And then—oh, mamma, I have been very wrong!’

And again there came a burst of tears, showing even more self-reproach than it seemed to me the occasion demanded. My own indignation was concentrated on Mrs. Penrhyn.

‘So far as I can understand it has been an unfortunate and wrong affair,’ I said; ‘and doubtless, Ina, you have been to blame in being led weakly. Now you must bear the pain of a true avowal; but when you have made it, neither your grandmamma nor anyone else will have a right to say anything more upon the subject.’

Still Ina’s tears fell. I really found it impossible to comfort her. Whether it was moral cowardice, or an exaggerated self-reproach, which occasioned such an outburst of sorrow, I could not tell then, and I have not been able to determine since. She became calmer after a time, and I made her tell me the history in detail of all that had gone on at Arling, and I came to the conclusion that Lord Hopeton had been treated very badly, and that he would have full right to complain of Ina’s refusal. But the exact extent of her own complicity in the affair it was impossible to make out. If I hinted that Mrs. Penrhyn had been to blame in urging her to encourage Lord Hopeton I was assured that it was her own doing, that she had been weak, deceitful, infinitely worse than I could in the least imagine her to be. But if I sympathised with this self-accusation, and took for granted that it was sincere, I was met with the excuse that it would have been impossible to have acted differently, because Mrs. Penrhyn was so bent upon the marriage that she was continually throwing them together, and compelling Ina to say and do things which in her heart she shrank from. The whole affair vexed me terribly. It made me feel so deeply the trouble which this poor child is likely to bring upon herself and

others from moral cowardice and weakness. She has written her answer to Lord Hopeton—a simple, straightforward, but courteous and grateful refusal—such as I should have expected from her. I do not think it could have been better—supposing, that is, she has in no way misled him. But if, as I very much fear, she has encouraged him, from vanity or from any other motive, he will have good reason to find fault with it. Expression of feeling there was none, except that she much regretted being compelled to say anything which might give him pain.

She asked me what she must do about the brooch. Must she keep it? It would be such a relief to return it, only she was afraid he would be offended.

‘Of course he would be offended,’ I said; ‘there had been no question of any regular understanding or engagement, which would have made it a matter of propriety to return the present when the agreement was broken. She had voluntarily placed herself in an untrue position, and she must accept the consequences, however humiliating. The brooch would always remind her that she had behaved unfairly to an honourable——’

I was interrupted. ‘Not exactly honourable, mamma; that is, he was honourable to me, but people don’t think him honourable; they don’t respect him.’

‘And so you were the less ashamed to trifle with him,’ I said. ‘But, Ina, that is very poor false reasoning. What Lord Hopeton was to you is the important point, and it certainly seems to me that he has acted perfectly well—openly to your friends and his own, and most fairly to yourself. I wish—yes, very earnestly I wish—that I could say the same of you.’

Ina was silent for several seconds. I thought once she was going to say something upon an impulse. She began,

checked herself, and turned away. Since then the subject has not again been mentioned; but there is a cloud over her which nothing seems to dispel. She has written to her grandmamma, but what she has said I don't know. In her place, I should not like to look forward to the answer.

CHAPTER XXIX.

July 4.—Marietta has been here with an entreaty that I would allow Agnes to go back with her to Chilhurst. I have felt for some time that the invitation was impending. It has been hinted at frequently, but I have always tried to put it aside;—selfishly, I am afraid. I cannot bear to think of parting with my darling, and I fancy that she will not get on happily away from me. She will need a mother-confessor. I could not bring myself to say ‘yes,’ immediately, though in my own heart I knew I should be obliged to do so eventually. I asked for time to consider, and I have been considering; and the more I consider the more I certainly see the reasonableness of what Mrs. Bradshaw suggested the other day. Agnes must learn to run alone, and I must learn to trust her. Mrs. Bradshaw happened to be at Woodleigh when I went there this afternoon to give the result of my cogitations. The Colonel was with her. He had most kindly come over on purpose to talk to John Penrhyn about the examination for the Indian Civil Service; for I have told John that I could give no answer to the proposition about Charlie till I knew what the expenses of the preparatory study were likely to be, and what would be my boy’s chance of success. Marian Bradshaw, it seems, has had two cousins who have passed successfully, and her husband knows all about it. He did not tell me much, but walked off with Mr. Neville in search of John, which rather provoked me; for I certainly thought that I was the person most in-

terested in the matter. But, as Mrs. Bradshaw explained to me, when we were afterwards alone—

‘My dear, that is the consequence of marrying a silly wife. She is taken as a standard. My son never supposes any woman can understand anything, because his wife can’t. I don’t attempt to enlighten him. It would only wound his pride to think he had made choice of a doll when he might have had a sensible human being. And you know there are some men who hug their pride as children hug bits of flannel. It soothes and sends them to sleep.’

‘Colonel Bradshaw must forget his mother, if he thinks all women are fools,’ I said.

‘Oh no; but then she is his mother, his Cause—if one may so say—the fountain of his own superiority, and so put out of the category of womankind generally. An excellent man is my son! Very humble, in his own peculiar way. He calls himself a “miserable sinner” every Sunday, and says it in all sincerity. But he has a profound appreciation of everything which belongs to himself. However, that is neither here nor there. Tell me about Agnes; when is she going?’

‘When?’ I said. ‘I have only just made up my mind that she is to go at all.’

‘But you have done so. Then the sooner the better. The child looks moonstruck.’

‘What do you mean? She is just what she always has been.’

‘Only in process of being fossilised. That, you know, is the condition of us all ultimately. We must, sooner or later—if we live long enough—become moral fossils;—tempers, principles, virtues, vices, becoming petrified and unchangeable. But it is undesirable to begin the condensing process too early, or the formation will be imperfect.’

‘I don’t like your theory,’ I said. ‘I choose to believe in a condition of continual progress and improvement.’

‘Believe what you like. There is no harm in theory, so long as you don’t shut your eyes to facts. Just glance round at your friends and acquaintances who have reached the same respectable age as yourself, and ask yourself what opinion you form of them.’

‘I don’t understand,’ I said. ‘I form my opinion according to their characters.’

‘Precisely so. They have characters, fixed, settled—fixed even in weakness and unsettledness. In other words, they are fossilised: so are you and I.’

‘But you don’t mean to say,’ I said, ‘that we can’t improve? That would be a terrible thought.’

‘I don’t mean to say “can’t” about anything. I am not so presumptuous. I believe that *cæ* has reference to God. But, as a general rule, men and women, of a certain age, don’t improve, unless the principle of improvement has, like any other principle, become fossilised, and then of course it gains strength from the very fact of its being firm, and not in a condition of liquefaction. But—forgive me—moralities and similes don’t do at three o’clock in the afternoon. So just tell me again, when does Agnes go?’

‘The Nevilles go next Tuesday.’

‘And this is Wednesday—just time enough to let Agnes taste the delight of anticipation without fear of satiety. She will do very well without you. What will you do without her?’

‘Very well also, if I do but know she is happy.’

‘And why is she not to be happy? They will neither eat her nor beat her.’

‘No; but perhaps they won’t understand her.’

‘So much the better, if you will forgive me for saying so. My private opinion is, that being understood, as people

call it, is the bane of the character of half the girls of the present day.'

'My good friend, how you do delight in paradox and exaggeration!' I exclaimed. 'You don't in the least mean what you have just said.'

'Pardon me, I do mean it. Being understood—interpreted according to the nineteenth century—is setting forth your pet infirmities before the eyes of a sympathising friend,—having them coloured and softened till they become interesting,—and then putting them aside to be looked at when you desire to make yourself picturesque in your own sight. In my young days, sins were sins, and follies were follies—very ugly and unpleasant to look at. I should never have thought of taking them out tenderly and showing them to a friend, and then wrapping them up in cotton, that they might be at hand to produce when I wished to have my likeness taken.'

'But your likeness could not be taken without them,' I said.

'Very possibly. But is it necessary to have one's likeness taken? Is it really any good to us to be able to bring forth all our good and bad qualities and put them together like a dissected map, that we may be able to say, *that is I*; or, as nature and common sense persist in saying, *that is me*?'

'I suppose it is no good to us,' was my reply; 'for the simple reason, that when we have put the good and bad qualities together, we have not arrived at the "I," or "me," as a whole.'

'And never shall arrive at it—at least, in that way;—any more than we could arrive at a knowledge of our own faces by having an exact fac-simile of every feature;—the expression—the soul—lies beneath. And so does the expression—the soul—of the character beneath its perceptible qualities.'

‘But the young people who crave to be understood,’ I said, ‘complain of this very thing, that so few can reach this expression of the mind—it is the very need which makes them practise introspection, and talk about themselves as they do. I am quite sure it is so with Agnes. She really cares comparatively little about the outward act; all she wants to be assured of is that the *spirit* of her life is right.’

‘Agnes is a little angel, transparent as light; but I suspect the very fact of her transparency bewilders her. I am sure she feels she ought to see a great many black things in her young mind (and no doubt they are there—though my dull eyes can’t discover them), and when she can’t find them she imagines them; and so her poor little brain and conscience are in a constant whirl, and she can’t tell fancy from reality; and then she comes to you—now, does not she?—and talks it all out, and you bring out a spiritual microscope and try to make everything clear.’

‘And end in making it more confused,’ I said, laughing. ‘I confess it was so once, but I have learnt better lately. We talk less and work more. Occupation she must have.’

‘Or she would go wild. I can quite comprehend that. But I don’t see how you can give her very much to do here.’

‘I manage it in various ways. She is beginning to be my housekeeper, and I make her write letters for me, and the Rector allows her to be useful in the parish; and when the boys are at home, she reads with them, and helps to keep them steady at their studies. I find responsibility the best tonic for her, though I was rather afraid of it at first.’

‘She won’t have much responsibility at Chilhurst,’ said Mrs. Bradshaw.

‘No, that is just what I fear. When she is taken away from her home duties, I fancy she will go back to her old habit of thinking and fidgeting, and want me to set her right.’

‘But, my dear, you have been educating her. What is the use of education, if a girl is never to be able to manage her own mind by herself? Besides, have you ever tried the effect of change and amusement?’

‘Never, except under my own eye.’

‘Then, trust me, even your dear little saint will develope, in some way you are totally unprepared for.’

‘I hope not,’ I said. ‘I really don’t want to have her different.’

‘She will be, and you will be glad of it. Remember my prophecy : and one thing is certain, that as she is, she is no more fit to go through the world than—whom shall I say?—St. Simeon Stylites or the Rector.’

I turned the conversation. Perhaps Agnes’ character is a weak point with me. I know it is a tender one. And I never can quite bear the way Mrs. Bradshaw speaks of her. She is so provokingly true in what she says. She rubs the dust off the butterfly’s wings so mercilessly. I know as well as she does that Agnes is not fit to get through the world, as people call it ; and, in a quiet way, I am always trying to make her more so. But when I shall have succeeded—if I ever should succeed—I am not at all sure that I shall have done a good or a satisfactory work. *Possibly* God knows better than we do! And, it may be, He sets before us every now and then one of these unworldly, etherealised, though, in some respects, unpractical minds, in order to suggest to us that there is something higher and better than getting through the world. At any rate, I don’t suppose the angels trouble themselves about getting through Heaven ; and Agnes is sure, if one may say so reverently and humbly, to be an angel one of these days.

As for understanding people, I am quite certain that Mrs. Bradshaw does not and cannot understand Agnes. I wonder whether St. Paul quite understood St. John.

CHAPTER XXX.

July 6.—Again two letters; one from Mrs. Penrhyn, one from Mrs. Huddersfield. I was not quite prepared for the contents of Mrs. Penrhyn's; though the absence of the 'my' at the commencement showed that I was in disgrace.

'DEAR MRS. ANSTRUTHER,—A letter from Ina this morning, with the purport of which you must be perfectly well acquainted, has so greatly distressed me that I find it difficult to write coherently. The confidence I have always given you in everything relating to my dear grandchild's affairs would, I had flattered myself, have elicited a reciprocal confidence on your part, especially in a case in which Ina's happiness is so very deeply concerned.

'The important and unexpected decision which, under your influence, Ina has made, must of course be grounded upon some intimate knowledge of Lord Hopeton's character, with which you have not thought it necessary to make me acquainted. Nothing short of this could justify an interference which must lower Ina in the eyes of Lord Hopeton's family, if not in those of the world, and lead them to stigmatise her as a heartless coquette. I believe Lord Hopeton himself will do her more justice. He will know from whence the obstacle arises. He will never believe that, after all which passed at Arling, Ina could so coldly and cruelly reject him. But whatever may be at the bottom of this most startling disappointment,

it is due both to yourself and to Lady Worthington's family that the real grounds for the refusal should be clearly stated. I have seen Lord Hopeton, and have promised to obtain for him this information. He has himself put forward an idea which I strive to look upon merely as the suggestion of a jealous and unhappy man; but I mention it that you may see the suspicions to which your interference, and Ina's apparent (I will not believe it can be real) caprice have given rise. Lord Hopeton says that he has, from the beginning of Ina's last visit, seen that there was some hidden counter-influence in the background; and this notwithstanding the evidences of regard for himself, which were unmistakable. And he tells me that at one time he had the strongest idea that this influence was connected with Mr. Anson; and that, in fact, you were bent upon bringing about Ina's marriage with him, though Ina herself did not wish it. It was a most uncomfortable suspicion. Lord Hopeton assures me that he did not cherish it or act upon it. Indeed, after Ina had accepted the brooch, there was nothing more to be said—the act was tantamount to the acceptance of himself; since I fully explained to the dear child at the time that it was not offered merely as a birthday present, but as the sign of a true affection. Now, however, the old suspicion, naturally enough, has revived, and Lord Hopeton begs to be assured from yourself that you have in no way endeavoured to bias Ina's mind, or to support the claims of another person.

‘We both of us see how probable it is that you should wish to maintain your influence over your stepdaughter, by marrying her into a family residing in your own immediate neighbourhood. The introduction and connection would also, no doubt, be good for your own children; and Mr. Anson is, I believe, a worthy young man, though weak, and not likely to hold any prominent position in the

county. If Ina and he had from the first been attached to each other, there would have been no objection to the marriage, though, under the circumstances, it would only have been right that the fact should have been made known to me. But Ina showed an open preference for Lord Hopeton. There could therefore have been no real feeling, on her part, for Mr. Anson;—the encouragement given him could only have come from yourself.

‘I can, as I said, understand the inducement, but I cannot understand yielding to it; still less can I understand the principle on which you can feel yourself justified in interposing the influence of a stepmother to induce a young girl of Ina’s age to refuse an offer which would secure her a most enviable position in the world, and give her the means of doing untold good to her fellow-creatures. Lord Hopeton is the most kind-hearted, generous of men; and Ina might be, and would be, the centre of beneficence and hospitality to the whole neighbourhood. It has been a bright dream, but I have been rudely awakened from it. Lord Hopeton and myself shall await your answer with anxiety.

‘Believe me to be, yours truly,

‘M. PENRHYN.’

Mrs. Huddersfield writes thus:—

‘MY DEAR MRS. ANSTRUTHER,—I have just had a long conversation with my mother, and endeavoured to calm her mind by telling her—what is evidently the fact—that you have taken up some prejudice against Lord Hopeton, which a little explanation will easily remove. It would have been better if you had made a few enquiries of those who, like ourselves, know him intimately. He really is a very pleasant gentlemanly young fellow; and though his Cambridge friends tell a few ill-natured stories about him, they are not worse than might be told of almost

every young man of his age. Considering the advantages of the connection, it would be absurd to interpose any obstacles, when the young people actually are attached to each other. Ina was always delighted to be with the Worthingtons, and especially with Lord Hopeton; and Lady Worthington took an immense fancy to her. In fact, between ourselves, the thing was generally talked of as settled before Ina left Arling. You see, therefore, how excessively awkward it would be to draw back now. With the Worthington and Arling estates so closely adjoining, it would never do to have a feud; and I cannot think what the consequences would be to my mother. At her age, agitation and worry of mind are so peculiarly dangerous; and poor Lady Worthington, too, would feel it deeply. Indeed, I cannot bear to think of the possibility. I am convinced, however, that a little explanation is all which is really required. Just let me know what you have heard, and I will undertake that explanations shall be given. With love to the children, in which Celia and Stasey join,

‘ Believe me, yours sincerely,
‘ M. HUDDERSFIELD.

‘ Celia has had whooping-cough, and we think of going to the sea-side for change of air. Do you think we could find comfortable lodgings at Westford? We should want two sitting-rooms and five bedrooms. The situation must not be exposed, and two of the bedrooms must be of a good size, and look to the south. We should be a little particular about cooking, for an invalid’s appetite is delicate. One thing more—we should desire to be within a few minutes’ walk of the best bathing place. Celia, of course, must not bathe, but her sister may. I daresay, when you are walking into Westford, you will be good enough to make these enquiries for me; and if you can

let me have an answer by the end of the week I shall be much obliged, as it is necessary for us to leave home immediately; and if we do not go to Westford we must fix upon some other place without delay.'

'Dear Mrs. Huddersfield! what were house agents invented for?—but that is a secondary consideration.'

I sent for Ina, and showed her the letters. She burst forth indignantly, 'They were most unfair, most unkind, most—everything, in fact, that they ought not to have been. Neither her grandmother nor aunt had ever understood me; they had never done me justice. It made her miserable to find that they could write to me in such a way. She would assure them both that I had nothing whatever to do with her decision.'

'That is just what I was going to suggest,' was my reply. 'I must leave explanations to you, Ina. My own answer will be very short.'

'I wish you would not write at all,' said Ina; 'they don't deserve it.'

'Nay,' I said, 'that would be uncourteous; and, Ina, in your grandmamma's place, I think I should have been very much surprised, to say the least, at your refusal.'

Ina coloured.

'I don't want to lecture you,' I continued. 'The whole affair is sufficiently awkward and unpleasant to read its own lesson without comment. But, I honestly confess, I don't see how, after Mrs. Penrhyn's explanation of Lord Hopeton's meaning, you could have accepted his present, unless you really had some feeling for him. You could not have deliberately meant to deceive him.'

'Oh no, mamma! not for a moment. I don't know why I did it; that is'—she stopped. 'Dear mamma, let me see your letter when you have written it.'

'Certainly, my love; I have nothing to conceal.'

'Mamma, you are vexed?'

‘I don’t know what I am, Ina. I can’t understand you. I don’t feel you are open with me.’

A knock at the door—enter Agnes. ‘Mamma, Mr. Penrhyn is downstairs, and wants to talk to you very much. He is obliged to go away this afternoon to London.’

I moved. Ina said, ‘Kiss me, mamma, and forgive me.’ And I did kiss her—but I am afraid it was coldly.

Agnes followed me downstairs. ‘Mamma, it is about Charlie Mr. Penrhyn wants to talk to you. He says he has heard of such a first-rate tutor, and Charlie may go to him directly. Please, may I tell Charlie?’

‘Yes, darling, when it is settled; but you young things are so eager. One can’t arrange all these important matters in a moment.’

‘And I must not tell Charlie how kind Mr. Penrhyn has been in enquiring?’

‘You must not tell anything just now, love.’ I know I spoke in a fretted tone, and Agnes was so evidently surprised that I could not help stopping before I went into the drawing-room, and saying, ‘The world does not go quite smoothly this morning, dear child, that is all; I daresay everything will be right by-and-by.’

Agnes looked at me wistfully.

Just then a burst of laughter from Hugh, Frank Neville, and Essie, was heard from the schoolroom, where they were all preparing to begin their morning holiday work.

‘They really must not make such a noise,’ I said hastily; ‘it is too bad of them.’

Agnes stole to the door, and closed it, and coming back to me, said, ‘We all want to make it go smoothly for you, darling mamma; but we don’t quite know how.’ And she laid her little hand in mine tenderly, and when she saw me smile, went off contented; which was more than I was. It is so excessively humiliating to feel irritated and irritable.

The very sight of John Penrhyn's face brightened and calmed me for the moment. It was so restful to find oneself brought in contact with the mind of a straightforward and sympathising honest-hearted man, who knew nothing of mental reservations, or concealments, or double motives, but took me just as I took him—meaning what he said, as I meant what I said. But the feeling did not last long. We began by discussing the Indian plan generally—the expenses, and the risks involved in it. John did not see the latter as I did—that was natural enough. He had taken, he said, an immense fancy to Charlie. He did not for a moment doubt that he would succeed. As to his living in London, he felt for him as a brother, and would look after him in all ways as such, if only I would consent to their being together. They could live more economically than if they were apart. Why should it not be so?

‘Why?’ I asked myself. ‘Simply because it was just the thing which I believe Charlie's father would have objected to. I could not tell John that. But then my husband might not have objected to it, knowing John Penrhyn. Yet, again, I had to consider his antecedents—his past history, which had not been satisfactory. Worry and uncertainty must have been legibly written on my face. For a moment I thought I would be quite open with John, and tell him exactly how I was circumstanced. But I could not guess how he might like the communication. He was proud, I knew. He was waiting for my answer now with an air of surprise and impatience. I could only say that I thought we might consider it settled that Charlie should try for the Indian Civil Service, and should read with the tutor, whom John had proposed; but as for living together, that was a matter requiring more thought. I must make enquiries.

‘About what? Dear Mrs. Anstruther, only say what are your difficulties.’

‘My dear John,’ I answered, ‘you must have patience with a mother’s fidgets.’

‘You don’t trust me? You are afraid I shall lead him wrong? I vow——’

I interrupted him: ‘Don’t vow: persons who vow quickly, repent quickly. I do trust you; yet I think if I can find a regular family for Charlie to be with, it may be better.’

‘I don’t see it,’ he said; ‘but I suppose you may be right. Only, I don’t think you will find one.’

‘You don’t wish I may,’ I said, laughing.

‘No, I don’t wish it. It may be very conceited in me, but I think I could work up Charlie for his tutor, and do a vast number of other things for him in the reading way, which will never be done in a private family. I don’t like private families; I have known too much of them. Besides, aren’t we relations?’

‘Connections, rather.’

‘I don’t acknowledge the distinction. Ina is my cousin, and Charlie is her brother. By-the-bye, Aunt Bessie writes me word that a great marriage is on the *tapis*—is it true? I ought to have congratulated you before, only I was so full of this Civil Service affair.’

‘A great marriage! Between whom?’

‘Between an angel and a brute!’ exclaimed John.
‘Ina and Lord Hopeton.’

‘Less than an angel, I am sure; and less than a brute, I hope. But, my dear John, I entreat you not to spread that report.’

‘May I contradict it?’

I hesitated.

The door was opened hurriedly by nurse, looking frightened and excited. ‘I beg your pardon, ma’am, but Cook said I had better come and tell you.’

‘Tell me what? Is anything the matter with——’

‘Sir John Anson is dead, ma’am. One of the grooms brought a note.’

‘For me?’

‘For Miss Ina, ma’am. He died this morning. The family are dreadfully upset.’

John began asking questions. I could not wait to hear the answers; and I hurried away without saying good-bye to him. Ina’s door was locked; she did not open it for some seconds. ‘Ina, dear,’ I said, as I entered, ‘this is very sad. Let me see the note.’

‘It was here. I can’t find it.’ She stooped down, and picked up a paper. When I looked at her, as she lifted up her face again, it was so deadly pale I thought she was going to faint.

She put the note into my hands; and, in a trembling, half-breathless, broken voice, she said, ‘Read it—and forgive—if you can.’ And then she laid her head on my shoulder and sobbed.

I read—

‘My darling one, it is all over, and I am miserable. It is I who have killed him. I told him yesterday. He was good and kind. I might have brought him round, but my mother interfered. The excitement brought on another fit, and he is gone. My mother accuses me. God knows I would have given my own life to save him. My only thought of comfort is in you.—Your ever devoted, H. ANSON.’

‘Ina!—the meaning—what is it?’

‘Mamma, I am engaged to Henry Anson.’

I rose, tried to speak, could not, and left her.

If I was wrong, I pray God to forgive me; but the intense bitterness of my disappointed confidence will remain with me to the last moment of my life.

CHAPTER XXXI.

10 *o'clock* P.M.—I must note down Ina's confession, made to me this afternoon; otherwise, in the difficulties which I foresee from her unhappy want of openness, I may judge her more harshly than will be her due.

She came to me penitent and very humble, entreating that I would listen; and my heart softened at the sight of her sorrowful face: and this was her tale:—

‘Mamma, when I went to Arling, I did not think much about anyone—that is to say, I liked Harry Anson, and I thought he liked me; I was tolerably sure of it, indeed; but he had never said anything to me, and I did not know how much I cared for him. We were great friends—such as we have been ever since we were together at Pau; but that was all. At Arling, grandmamma and Aunt Maria put it into my head that Lord Hopeton was paying me attentions; and I was very silly, and liked to think it, and so I know I encouraged him—I am afraid you would say I flirted with him. But grandmamma was always pleased when she saw us together, and Aunt Maria continually repeated the things he had said of me; so that really I did not think I was doing any harm. I did not respect him, because I had heard things against him; and Aunt Bessie one day said that she should be very sorry if any of her nephews were to leave the university in disgrace, as he had done. But then grandmamma stopped her, and said that reports

were no doubt exaggerated, and all young men were apt to be a little wild for a time. I asked Aunt Bessie what the reports were, but she would not tell me. She only said she was afraid they were quite true. Geoffrey Huddersfield too called him a scamp; but it was all very vague, and I did not see why I was to be cold and uncivil to him when he was kind to me, merely because there were these stories going about. But I don't mean to say that I thought nothing about them. They made me suspicious, and I often saw and heard things which made me feel they must be true; and so, though I used to amuse myself with Lord Hopeton, the idea of actually marrying him never entered my head as a possibility. I liked to laugh and talk with him. But you know, mamma, to laugh and talk with a man is very different from marrying him.'

'Very, my love,' was all I could say; 'but the one is often the prelude to the other.'

'Oh yes, I know; and it was wrong; but I did not at all think how wrong; in fact, I could scarcely help myself, because we were thrown so much together. After a time, Charlotte Anson came to Worthington, and at first I did not like her. She used to be so odd and cold; and she made such sharp remarks about me and Lord Hopeton,—she was sometimes quite rude; and at length, one day, I took her up for them, and said I could not bear them. We were alone, walking in the Worthington grounds. I spoke out quite freely, and she did the same; and we had a long conversation; and then it came out that she had believed, when she came to Worthington, that I cared for Henry Anson, and that he had talked a great deal to her about me; and so she was very much surprised and disappointed. Mamma, do you know, it made me very happy to hear this, even though Charlotte Anson did blame me so much; it gave me such a thrill at my

heart, I could not tell why. And I told Charlotte at once that I did not like Lord Hopeton, and did not respect him; and she seemed quite relieved, and went on talking to me about Henry, and telling me of all the kind good things she knew of him, and how fond his sisters are of him, and how his mother dotes upon him; and then again she repeated that she was certain he loved me dearly; and so I could not help liking to hear this, and letting her see it. And I daresay—indeed I am nearly sure—she told Henry; for almost immediately afterwards he came to Worthington himself. When we met, it was very uncomfortable, and I think I was cold, because I felt awkward; but, of course, I could not help thinking about him; and Charlotte knew this, and became a kind of go-between, and was very anxious to make everything smooth and straight—quite as anxious as grandmamma was to make everything smooth with Lord Hopeton. But just because I cared for the one, and did not care for the other, I was able to laugh and amuse myself with Lord Hopeton, whilst I scarcely said anything to Harry; and this, I suppose, deceived people. And then there was a kind of pleasure in knowing that I was taking them all in—that I had my own private feelings quite different from the public ones; and Charlotte Anson was indignant with grandmamma, because she said Lord Hopeton was a worthless young fellow who would make me miserable.’

‘But all this time what did Mr. Anson himself do and say?’ I enquired.

‘Oh, not much. We were very seldom alone; but he had little opportunities of showing what he felt; and Charlotte managed everything so that we might understand each other.’

‘But, my dear Ina, why did not Mr. Anson come forward at once? surely that would have been the most honourable mode of proceeding.’

‘Charlotte told me why. He was afraid of what Sir John and Lady Anson would say.’

‘Precisely so. They would unquestionably have disapproved.’

‘But without any cause, mamma, as Charlotte said; only from prejudice, and because it has always been supposed that Harry would marry Lydia Harcourt. There was no real objection.’

‘And therefore, my love, there was all the more reason why Mr. Anson ought to have spoken out.’

‘He had suffered so much, mamma. Long ago, when he cared for Marietta, they were so very unkind, and sent him abroad, as he knew quite well, to get him out of the way. And he was afraid they would attempt something of the same kind now, so he would not say anything explicit.’

‘But, my dear, he is of age; he can act for himself.’

‘Oh no, mamma; he is quite dependent upon his father still; and Sir John was, as you know, in a very shaky state of health then, and Harry feared so much to excite him. That was why everything was to be kept quiet.’

‘And I suppose, then, you made no change in your manner to Lord Hopeton, though you were all the time receiving privately the attentions of another man.’

‘Oh, mamma, mamma! how terribly you put it! I don’t think I thought anything about attentions. I only wanted to know that Harry cared for me, and he only wanted to know that I cared for him. And as it was necessary to keep the matter private, I was obliged not to make any change in my manner to Lord Hopeton, or grandmamma and everyone else would have remarked upon it, and then there would have been a regular explosion. But it did at times make me very uncomfortable.’

‘And about the birthday present, Ina?’

‘Ah, that was very dreadful. I hesitated a great deal; I said as much as I dared about refusing it, but really grandmamma would not allow me. She said I had gone so far that, unless I could assure her I was attached to some other person, there could be no reason to give Lord Hopeton the pain of declining his present. She assured me it did not pledge me in any way; it only meant that I did not dislike him. As to reciprocating his feeling, he did not in the least at that moment expect it.’

‘But, Ina, how was it possible—how could you so deceive your grandmamma as to allow her to suppose that you were not attached to another person?’

‘Because I could not help myself, mamma. Harry had said nothing definite to me, and I could not betray Charlotte Anson’s confidence.’

‘But you might have given your grandmamma a general idea that you were not quite free, without mentioning names.’

‘But she would have found out—she would have questioned me. You don’t know grandmamma. She never lets anything rest when she wishes to know about it. The truth must have been discovered; and then—as Harry had said nothing direct—how terribly awkward it would have been! And grandmamma would have been so angry! And, somehow, I am sure matters would have come round to Sir John and Lady Anson; and what should I have done? Oh no, mamma! it was impossible.’

‘Except, my dear, that deception and untruth ought to be the most impossible of all things.’

‘Was it really untruth? I did not think it so. I took grandmamma’s question as if it meant, “Was I engaged to anyone else?” And I was not engaged.’

‘A mere prevarication, Ina; but you were in a difficulty, I own. The real evil lay beyond—in having allowed yourself to encourage Lord Hopeton’s attentions when you did not care for him.’

‘Yes, I see that now,’ said Ina, sorrowfully.

‘And, after all,’ I continued, ‘I do not clearly understand. You tell me one moment that you are not engaged, and the next that you are. Let me, at least, know exactly how the case really stands.’

‘I was not engaged then, mamma. I am engaged now.’ And Ina coloured, till the tears stood in her eyes.

‘And at the time we were speaking of Lord Hopeton’s offer, when you assured me—no, not assured me, I give you credit for avoiding an absolute falsehood—when you allowed me to think that your affections were free, you were really engaged to Mr. Anson?’

Ina hid her face in her hands as she murmured, ‘I gave him my promise at Headington.’

‘And the note,’ I exclaimed,—‘the note which you received that evening?’

‘It was from him,’ said Ina. ‘I should have explained then; but when you thought it was Charlotte Anson’s, I had not courage to speak—I left it to Harry; and before you asked me that question afterwards about being attached to anyone, I had heard from him again, and he had begged me to delay telling you, if possible.’

‘Oh, Ina, Ina!’ was all I could say.

‘Mamma, forgive me; I have not meant harm; I did only what seemed necessary at the time. I cannot bear to pain you. And now I have told you everything—quite everything. We will do all you wish; we will be guided entirely by you. Only tell us what to do. Only trust us.’

‘There is the difficulty,’ I said. ‘Ina, you are both moral cowards. Who can trust a moral coward?’

‘Mamma, you don’t know how cruelly Harry was

treated at home—how miserable they made him by urging him to marry Lydia Harcourt.'

'I wish for no excuses, Ina; you have brought the trouble upon yourselves; and the best hope for the future will be if you can bring yourselves to own it.'

'I do own it,' said Ina, in a low voice; 'I know I was wrong. I will bear any blame; but Harry——'

'He ought never to have placed you in such a false position,' I said; 'much less ought Charlotte Anson to have lowered herself to act the part of a manœuvrer and go-between. It has been a most unsatisfactory affair on all sides, and I see now only one course to be taken.'

'Oh, mamma! what? Tell me: indeed, I will do anything.'

'To consent to hold no communication with each other until Lady Anson shall have recovered in a degree from this stunning blow, and shall be willing to recognise the engagement.'

'That she never will be,' exclaimed Ina. 'She hates the very name of Anstruther.'

'Perhaps she has reason to do so. It has interfered with a wish very near her heart. And I am afraid she will scarcely be inclined to look upon her new daughter-in-law with much respect.'

Ina remained for some seconds silent; then she said, 'Mamma, may I tell Harry what you say?'

'No,' I replied. 'If you put yourself under my guidance you must let me say everything.'

'But he is so very miserable.'

'He has acted weakly and wrongly, and he must bear the consequence. It is impossible for me to sanction your intercourse until Lady Anson does.'

'And I must not write to him?'

'You must have no communication whatever with him. If you have, it will be against my express wishes,—I

would say commands, but that you have passed the age when I had a right to command.'

'Mamma, mamma! pray do not speak in that way. It is the first wish of my heart to please you.'

'Stay, Ina; you mistake. Your first wish is to please yourself; your second, to please Henry Anson; your third, I believe, to please me; and after that, I think you may have some wish to please God.'

Ina looked at me at first without answering. I think she had not till then understood how very seriously I was hurt and disappointed. After a few seconds she said, 'I will do whatever you think right.'

'Then, my dear, you will do nothing. I will write myself to Henry Anson, and say just what I have said to you. But I will send no messages; and I trust to your honour not to attempt to send any.'

Ina murmured, 'I could bear it for myself, but he will be so very unhappy.'

'There is no choice,' I replied; and I sat down at my writing-table and wrote the following note:—

'DEAR MR. ANSON,—I grieve from my heart to be compelled to add to your sorrow at such a moment. The expression of the sympathy I really feel will, I fear, appear a mockery when I say, that after hearing from Ina of the engagement which, unknown to your parents and to myself, has been entered into, I have no alternative but to request that you will, neither *directly* nor *indirectly*, attempt to hold any communication with my daughter, either by word, or writing, or through the medium of any other person, until your proposal shall have received Lady Anson's sanction. I feel that I have great reason to complain that you should have been led to declare your attachment, at a time, and under circumstances, which appeared to you to render secrecy necessary. I do not pretend to judge of the necessity; but

I cannot allow Ina to take advantage of it. In your present state of distress I forbear to comment upon the painful position in which your conduct has placed Ina, or upon the weakness which induced her to cooperate with you; but I will trust to your honour that no further error of a similar kind shall be committed. When, with Lady Anson's full consent, you can come forward openly and ask for mine, it will be time enough to state my own feelings and wishes. I will now only assure you, that none of your friends feel more deeply for you, in the blow which has fallen upon you, than myself. May God help and comfort you!

‘Your sincere friend,

‘MARY ANSTRUTHER.’

When I had finished my note, I showed it to Ina. Her remark was, ‘It will make him wretched;’ and I did not dispute it. It ought to do so. As for Charlotte Anson, she deserves, and shall receive, a most severe lecture; but I shall take no notice of her at present. Everything I say or do will be liable, I foresee, to misconstruction. Lady Anson, with her strong prejudices, will never believe that I have been as ignorant in this affair as I really have been; and therefore the less I say and do the better. Ina's confession has in some degree relieved me. She has been most sadly weak; her moral cowardice is alarming; but there has been no planned intentional deceit. Henry Anson has acted like what he is—a weak, empty-headed, yet warm-hearted young man. A most unfit husband for Ina!—utterly incompetent to guide her! I could pray that the engagement may come to nought. But God knows best. And now, how am I to write to Mrs. Penrhyn?

CHAPTER XXXII.

July 5.—Mr. Neville, Marietta, and I have had a long talk about things in general. I could not be happy till I had told them everything. I knew they would give me sympathy, and they might give me help and counsel. Marietta says she is glad that things are no worse. She had greatly feared that Ina was in some way actually entangled with Lord Hopeton, so that she might at last have been compelled to marry him. If she had remained longer at Arling, she declares that she fully believes this would have been the end.

‘Mrs. Penrhyn is just an old spider, spinning the web,’ was her conclusion, uttered with Italian eagerness and Italian accent; ‘and Ina would have been the little fly.’

Both she and Mr. Neville cheered me by reminding me that, after all, Ina was not going to throw herself away upon a person wholly unworthy of her. Mr. Neville is really fond of Henry Anson, and gives him credit for more sense than the world does generally. He has been treated, he says, as a child by his parents—kept in leading-strings, instead of being allowed to run alone; and the consequence is, that whenever he does take a step by himself, he is sure to tumble down; but his natural disposition is extremely good, and he will, without doubt, make Ina an affectionate husband.

Yes, I said to myself, but will she respect him? And without respect will not her natural faults be fostered by marriage? Will she not become more self-willed—more

self-deceiving? But I could not bring forward my fears then, for there were other matters to talk about. I consulted Mr. Neville as to the desirableness of Charlie's living in London lodgings, or going to a tutor. He urged me to accept John Penrhyn's offer. Risk there must be everywhere; and Mr. Neville assured me that he has not now the slightest doubt of John's entire steadiness; and added, that he would do all, and more than all, that I could expect, to stir up Charlie to work, and keep him from idle habits. It was very hard after this to say 'No;' but I could not make up my mind to go so entirely against my husband's wishes. I tried to make Mr. Neville say what would be the next best plan. He was irritated with me for what he thought my obstinacy, and would scarcely consider any other. But at last he did allow that my boy might be comfortable with the tutor whom John had recommended. As to his companions, he would not undertake to answer for them; they might be all very well; they might lead him into infinite mischief. He did not suppose there was any very strict control exercised over them.

'And John would be so very wise and kind,' said Marietta; 'and there would be so much less expense.'

'Perfectly wise,' I said; 'yet still——'

'Still,' repeated Marietta, laughing, 'you will say "Yes."'

'Still,' I answered, 'I must say "No." You will think me very foolish,' I added, addressing Mr. Neville, 'perhaps very wrong.'

'I scarcely see why you should have consulted any person on a subject on which your mind was made up,' he replied, coldly.

Marietta laid her hand on his arm. 'There may be reasons, Edward, which you don't understand.'

'Certainly, I don't understand. How can I?'

To almost anyone but Mr. Neville I could have said out all that was in my mind; but I had an unconquerable aversion to this kind of unreserve with him. He is just the person to turn away from such scruples as mine with something like contempt;—contempt, too, it might be, for the memory which to me is sacred. He would say that the dying have no right to bind the living. I thought, and hesitated, and thought again; and ended by saying, that I would not absolutely decide till Monday.

A harder trial awaited me at home. Charlie fancied his fate would be sealed by the council at Woodleigh, and in his impatience had stationed himself at the gate to watch for my return. His countenance fell when I told him that I had almost certainly decided he should board with his tutor. He thought it was Mr. Neville's doing, and began to complain that he or anyone else should be allowed to interfere. I was obliged to explain that the decision was entirely my own, and then Charlie was a little more willing to acquiesce in it. But he is very pertinacious, and when once he has taken a fancy into his head, it is most difficult to get rid of it. He used every kind of argument to persuade me to change my mind; and what he said was extremely sensible, and I had great difficulty in answering it; in fact, I did not really answer it. I gave him no reason for my determination which could at all satisfy him; and the consequence was, as I might have anticipated, that, for the first time in his life, he begins to distrust my judgement, and to think me prejudiced.

‘You don't like John Penrhyn, mamma?’ he said, after we had talked for some time. ‘Ina says she is sure you don't. I wish you would tell me why?’

‘My dear boy, what could make you both take such an absurd idea into your heads? I do like John, exceedingly.’

‘But you don’t—something—I can’t tell what. Is it because his name is Penrhyn?’

How very near the truth! and yet it was not quite the truth. So I was able to repudiate the suggestion, though not so heartily as to convince Charlie that there was no foundation for it.

‘I don’t like the Arling Penrhyns, either,’ he said. ‘But they are not friends of John’s; for at one time they were very unkind to him. Frank Neville told me that.’

I was on the point of saying, ‘I hope you don’t talk to Frank Neville about family affairs;’ but I stopped myself. If boys, or girls either, make friends who are worth anything, there must be confidence between them, and this must involve a knowledge of each other’s difficulties in daily life. So family affairs will always more or less be brought in. One may try to draw a rigid line, but it is certain to be overstepped; and then the conscience is either troubled with scruples, or rendered callous. The only thing one can do safely, I think, is to enjoin silence upon any one specified point, if necessary. In the present case there is no such point; and I must leave Frank and Charlie to make their discoveries, and form their opinions upon domestic politics as they choose.

I am afraid it would not do to tell Charlie my difficulty. A boy of his age would not enter into it; and it might lead to something like irritation and irreverence towards his father’s memory; for he could not possibly know and understand all the facts and circumstances which led my husband to dread so greatly any intimacy with Henry Penrhyn’s family.

But I am not the happier for all this. It is the first cloud which has come between me and my boy, and that at precisely the age when it is most important that we should understand one another.

Charlie is very good, and has given in to my wishes quite as easily, more easily, indeed, than I had anticipated; but he is bitterly disappointed, and will, I fear, begin his London life without energy.

It was even more painful to me to tell John what I had decided upon. He was so affectionate, and eager, and generous, he almost shook my resolution; I believe he would have done so if I had not made a kind of pledge to myself, before entering upon the subject, that nothing should induce me to alter for at least six months. I took my stand upon this last compromise, and John thought that I had yielded somewhat, and so was willing at last to give in himself; but I do not think I have yielded in the least.

I had but a few minutes before post time to write to Mrs. Penrhyn, and I was rather glad of it, for it gave me an excuse for few words:—

‘DEAR MRS. PENRHYN,—I have been so busy all day that I have only a few minutes left in which to answer your letter, and assure you that Ina’s refusal of Lord Hopeton’s proposal is entirely her own doing, and that I have never in any way used my influence to bias her mind. I know nothing of Lord Hopeton, except by report—*that* does not speak well of him; but I am bound to believe that you would not have given your sanction to his offer if all that the world says of him were true. At any rate, I can only repeat again that Ina has decided quite independently. I regret that you should be disappointed, but we shall both own that Ina is the best judge of her own happiness. I will so far notice your suggestion with regard to Mr. Anson as to assure you that I entirely disapprove of contrivance or manœuvring in any case, more especially where so serious an affair as marriage is concerned; and that the last thing I should do would be to endeavour to induce Ina to marry to please my ambition or conve-

nience, instead of looking to her own highest welfare. Mrs. Huddersfield sent me a request to look for lodgings at Westford: may I ask you to let her know that I will not fail to make the enquiries as soon as possible? The post is just going, and I have not time for a word more.

‘ Ever, dear Mrs. Penrhyn,

‘ Very truly yours,

‘ M. ANSTRUTHER.’

I asked Ina what she had written, and she told me that she had torn up half a dozen sheets of paper, not knowing what to say; and at last had scribbled a few hurried lines, saying that she was very unhappy, and could not bear to vex her grandmamma, but that I quite approved, and she could not change, and she hoped she was doing right.

Oh, Ina, Ina!—just precisely what she ought not to have said! Yet she was quite surprised when I told her so. It was what came into her head, she said; and it was true she was very miserable, and she had done what I approved. Of course Mrs. Penrhyn will suppose that my approval implies my influence.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Wednesday, July 9.—Woodleigh is once more deserted. Marietta, Mr. Neville, and John Penrhyn went this morning. Everything seems very desolate, and yet in one sense I am relieved. Ever since I decided for the London tutor there has been a restraint. They all think me wilful and blind; and there has been no heartiness in assisting me in any of my little arrangements for Charlie. The two boys, with Frank Neville, are gone out fishing with old Barnes, the steadiest fisherman in the place. They wanted to take Essie with them, but I objected. Essie really must work; she is not half as steady as Agnes; and her head is quite turned with all these comings and goings. That is the difficulty of home education. Society comes first, and the children second; and I don't see how it is to be avoided. I could find it in my heart to have a governess, but I can't afford it; and perhaps, after all, I should only increase my troubles.

I feel lonely and dispirited. Ina and I have very little to say to each other. The one topic upon which we could talk is the one upon which, by mutual consent, we are silent.

Sir John's funeral was yesterday. Ina, I know, was thinking all day of Henry Anson; so was I. There has been no communication from the Manor since I wrote. This is strange; but nurse says she hears that Mr.

Anson has been quite ill. Also, I am told that Lady Anson will leave the Manor, and take a house at Westford. That indicates a complete split between her and her son. It is all most sad for her, and for everyone. A pouring rain, with mist and wind, must have added to the pain they all had to bear yesterday. Captain Shaw was to have been present by invitation, but he scarcely could have been in such weather. No one besides who was not a relation was asked to the house. Mr. Neville had a note from Henry Anson, telling him that this was in accordance with his mother's wish. He expressed no desire to see Mr. Neville, which pained the latter a good deal. Mr. Neville was present at the funeral, as a matter of respect; but he spoke to no one. Henry Anson, he says, was quite overcome.

July 9. — A note sent to Woodleigh brought to me to direct;—it is from Henry Anson to Mr. Neville. I could see that by the handwriting. The message was sent back that Mr. Neville was gone.

5 P.M.—Ina and I were sitting in the drawing-room, when Mr. Anson was announced. Ina instantly, without my suggestion, left the room. He glanced at her imploringly, but did not attempt to stop her. Poor young man! he really looks dreadfully ill. I felt intensely sorry for him; but though I gave him my hand, I said, 'Mr. Anson, this ought not to be; it is what I did not expect.'

He burst forth eagerly: 'What did I expect?—what had I a right to expect?—that he should sit down quietly—rejected, crushed—without sympathy, without hope? It could not be. He must see me, and therefore he had come.'

'But,' I said, 'you could have written; you have taken me unawares.'

'I meant to do so. If I had written, you would have

refused to see me. I had no alternative. You must let me speak. I would have talked to Neville if he had been here; I did not know he was going. I have not known anything for the last week.'

'It must have been very terrible,' I began.

'Terrible!—you can never know. My mother says—but no matter. My father was dying; and it was she who got the truth out of me, and then told him and excited him. She thought he would have interfered, but he did not; he only bade me make my mother happy.'

'And you will make her happy,' I said; 'you will give her time, and bring her round to the idea by degrees.'

'Then you give your consent? Say so, and I will promise anything you wish.'

'No,' I said, 'I do not give my consent. As I told you in my letter, I will say nothing till you have Lady Anson's sanction.'

'Which I shall never get. But I am independent.'

'Yes,' I said, coldly; 'and so is Ina. If you both choose to act against a mother's expressed wish, you can do so; the law will not interfere.'

He struck his forehead with his hand, as he muttered, 'If they drive me to desperation, I shall do it.'

'There must, however, be two parties to the agreement,' I said; 'and I doubt if Ina will be one.'

He looked ashamed, and, I must confess, weak. He has strong feelings, but feeble resolution; and I felt more than ever that he was not the man to raise Ina.

The conviction gave earnestness to my words, as I said, 'Mr. Anson, my own determination is unalterable; and I am sure you will not give me the pain of enforcing it more decidedly. I cannot see you again under present circumstances; and I need scarcely say that Ina will not. Do not compel me to tell my servant that if Mr. Anson should call, he is not to be admitted.'

It went to my heart to speak in this way to him, for his face was agonised ; and when I paused, there came such a burst of sorrow, that I felt almost as if I must comfort him as my child.

But it was weak sorrow—passionate, hopeless ; there was no energy in it. His threats—if such they might be called—were but a kind of childish vengeance. I saw plainly how it was that he had never been able to take a bold manly part with regard either to Marietta or Ina. Yet when he said he would stand up against his mother, I believed him ; for he is, I suspect, like most weak persons, obstinate ; and the fact of opposition will give him just the strength he needs. I was induced at last to be a little more kind to him ; but I regretted it, for he seized upon my few words of sympathy as encouragement, till I reminded him again how much cause I had to find fault with him, and then he fell once more into despair, and thought I intended to put fresh obstacles in his way.*

We parted at last with a promise on his part that he would not attempt to see Ina, or hold any communication with her, for the next month, unless he should in that time have succeeded in inducing his mother to look favourably upon his wishes. Beyond this I could not induce him to pledge himself. He would fain have left a message for Ina, but I refused to deliver it.

I went to Ina directly after the interview, and told her precisely what had passed. I forbore to say all I thought of Henry Anson's weakness, because, as they are actually engaged, it would not be desirable to lead her to look down upon the man who may one day be her husband ; but I said in general terms that I did not desire the marriage, and that it would be most distressing to me if the engagement were carried out in opposition to Lady Anson's wishes. I added also that I believed the only right thing for them to do was to practise patience and submission.

At any rate, they must expect no co-operation or sanction from me. Whatever they did would be done by themselves, upon their own responsibility.

I don't think Ina liked this. Fond as she is of having her own way, she still likes to shelter herself under the approval of another; and I believe I put a more effectual barrier in her path by throwing the *onus* of her actions upon herself, than I could possibly have done by attempting to control or dictate to her. Neither did she like the way in which I spoke of the marriage. She said that 'she was sure that I did not understand Henry Anson, or do him justice. As for herself, she was not like Marietta; she could not cast herself down before her husband and let him drive a Juggernaut car over her;'—which was simply exaggerating and distorting the very little I had said. No one can feel more strongly than myself that a woman is bound to have an independent judgment, and to assist her husband by putting it before him, instead of becoming his mental slave. But, at the same time, to marry a man whom one cannot look up to as being wiser and better than oneself, is, to my mind, a species of moral suicide. By forcing a woman into an unnatural position, it must ultimately mar, even if it should not destroy, her gentleness and humility. I do not see, in fact, how 'the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit' can exist in the case of a wife who takes the upper hand, and governs her husband. But all this is merely my own feeling. I can't pretend to judge for others; only, as a dear old friend of mine once said to me, when we had been discussing the intricacies of a course of love which certainly did not 'run smooth,' 'My dear, marrying and giving in marriage is a most remarkable thing!'

CHAPTER XXXIV.

July 14.—John Penrhyn has written very kindly and considerately, and apparently without the slightest feeling of pique. He has seen Mr. Sandham—Charlie's tutor that is to be—and now I may send my boy to London as soon as I please. John proposes that he should go up on Thursday, when Frank Neville will be returning home. He promises me to see him often and look after him. I wish he would leave him alone, but I cannot say so. I suppose I must agree; but I don't want Charlie to go yet, and leave Hugh by himself—not that they will care much, for he and Essie are inseparable. Essie's taste for natural history has lately developed in rather an awkward way. Her delight is in spiders, and she and Hugh have regular battles with the housemaid in their defence. I have promised that when she has gained a certain sum by the marks in her register, I will add something more to it, to enable her to buy a microscope; and with this inducement she really works hard. But I begin to feel the difficulties of my complicated duties, and how next to impossible it is to attend to any one set thoroughly. Whilst I have been vexed about Ina and perplexed about Charlie, it has been hard work to keep Essie at regular work. And then there are duties to society. We have been invited to dine with the Fowlers on the 23rd, and I have declined so often that I feel obliged to accept the invitation; but Ina will go unwillingly, and be dull herself, and make others so. She does not understand rousing

herself to be agreeable upon duty. Her motto is, that cheerfulness must be natural and spontaneous, or it ceases to be cheerfulness. Very plausible! but as persons go on in life, if they were only cheerful in manner when they felt cheerful at heart, they would be very burdensome to their neighbours.

July 20.— Charlie has gone; Frank with him. Charlie is resigned to his fate, but he pines for John Penrhyn, and looks forward to seeing him in London as his chief pleasure. Agnes gives him silent sympathy. I say nothing, and feel in a measure guilty of marring his happiness. When the boys were departed, I left Agnes with Ina, who is always affectionate when there is any trouble. Agnes will be able to pour out her heart to her sister as she cannot to me, knowing that I do not quite take her view of matters. Frank Neville is a great loss, but I am rejoiced that he is still Charlie's friend. He is just the boy to keep Charlie up to work, and to laugh him out of over-fastidiousness and false refinement.

In the afternoon, just as I was setting off for Beechwood, with Hugh and Essie, Miss Anson was announced. The name gave me quite a turn. My cold manner must at once have shown her what I thought, for she began, in her abrupt yet rather taking way—

‘Mrs. Anstruther, I am come to make my peace with you.’

‘I am glad,’ I said, ‘Miss Anson, that you are willing to own that this is necessary. But perhaps you are come to make some explanation. The case requires it.’

‘Oh no!’ she exclaimed. ‘I make no explanations. I don’t think they are ever of the slightest use; and Harry assures me he and Ina have told you everything.’

‘I hope, and I conclude, they have,’ was my reply.

‘It was very wrong in me, I daresay,’ she continued; ‘but I never can resist helping two poor creatures to

understand each other, when they are about to fly off at a tangent. And if I had not spoken to Ina as I did, she would infallibly have entangled herself with Lord Hopeton. And you know that would have been ten times worse than engaging herself to Harry, for she did not care an iota for him. She would only have been led into it by Mrs. Penrhyn.'

'I am not going to enter into the question of Ina's entanglement with anyone,' I said. 'You may have had the best motives, Miss Anson, for what you did; but you cannot deny that, believing that Sir John and Lady Anson would object to the engagement, you still encouraged your cousin, and assisted him in carrying on a secret understanding with Ina; whilst, still further, you sanctioned Ina's apparent preference for Lord Hopeton, when privately you knew she was attached to Mr. Anson. I don't know what you may call this, but there is a very awkward word which I should apply to it—clandestine.'

Miss Anson coloured crimson.

'I was not prepared for this,' she said.

'No,' I replied, 'I am sure you were not prepared for it. Persons who meddle in affairs of this kind are seldom prepared for the construction which the world puts upon their conduct. By your advice and assistance, you have led Ina to say and do things which must stamp her as a heartless coquette in the eyes of Lady Worthington, and——'

'But what could I have done?' she exclaimed, interrupting me. 'Was I to see Ina throwing herself away upon that scamp, Lord Hopeton, when I knew that an honest, honourable man like my cousin Harry loved her to desperation?'

'If Mr. Anson loved Ina,' I said, 'it was his business to say so, not yours. And as regards Lord Hopeton, if you had reason to think him what you state, you might

have found means to open Ina's eyes, without attempting to manœuvre. But what I find fault with, Miss Anson, even more than with anything which passed at Arling, is the assistance—the clandestine assistance—which you gave to Mr. Anson and Ina here, on the day of the Headington picnic. And before that, your conduct was not honourable; you endeavoured to deceive me—and you did deceive me.'

A half smile played round Miss Anson's lips.

'Dear Mrs. Anstruther, you must forgive me. I really can't see my naughtiness quite in the light you do, and so I can't be as penitent as I ought to be. It was just a little amusement.'

'Sport to you, and death to me,' I said, gravely. 'When Lady Anson complains, as she unquestionably will, that Ina engaged herself secretly, what am I to say?'

'Poor dear Lady Anson! she will make a fuss for the time, but it will pass over: I know her better than you do. And Harry is quite independent of his mother. You need not trouble yourself in the least about that.'

'Is it quite impossible, Miss Anson,' I exclaimed impatiently, 'to make you comprehend what it is which really touches me in this matter? Let Ina marry Mr. Anson, or let her not—I put that question entirely aside—she has compromised herself by the way in which the engagement has been formed.'

'Only with one or two persons. The world generally is not so particular,' was the reply. 'And the real fact of the matter is, that if things had not been done as they were, Ina would never have been engaged to Harry at all. Lady Anson and Mrs. Harcourt would have moved heaven and earth to make him pledge himself to his father to marry Lydia Harcourt. It was that which they were always aiming at; and when at length the fact of his en-

gement to Ina came out, it was only because they urged and tormented him so, and told him that the marriage with Lydia was Sir John's dying wish.'

'Mr. Anson said nothing of this to me,' I observed.

'Oh no! poor Harry! He never says more about anything than he can help; he is always afraid of getting into scrapes. And he really was in a difficulty, for he had given a kind of half-promise to his mother that he would think about Lydia, just before he went to Worthington. So dreadfully miserable he was! I should have been a wretch if I had not helped him.'

'Your opinion of what constitutes what you call "a wretch" differs from mine,' I said. 'I believe that there is no disgrace like that of deception.'

Miss Anson paused before answering; then she said:

'I can't pretend to be what I am not, Mrs. Anstruther. I have done your daughter good service, though in a way which you don't like: *that* I am sorry for. I don't ask you to forgive me, because I don't suppose you will; but I hope you will shake hands with me.'

She held out her hand, which I just took, and then allowed to drop.

'And this is to be our footing for the future?' she said, with somewhat of regret in her voice.

I bowed, and she bowed; and then she turned away, and I rang the bell for the servant to open the door.

So ended our most disagreeable interview. I am not satisfied; I did not say what I intended to say, and what I did say produced no effect. I doubt whether any words would really have made an impresssion upon an off-hand, surface-principled woman like Miss Anson. Very good-natured she is, I daresay; that is, what the world calls good-natured. She will work to please others, when it happens to please herself; but as for refinement, delicacy, high-mindedness — she does not know what the words

mean. If she is to be Ina's friend, alas for the poor child! Yet Miss Anson is a general favourite in society, especially with gentlemen; she is so free, and bright, and amusing; never put out—as I have several times lately heard it said—always willing to help everyone. Henry Anson's weakness comes out clearer than ever. What is a man worth who can be dragged into a half-promise to marry one person, and then can go immediately afterwards and engage himself wholly to marry another? And how much does Ina know of all this?

Miss Anson kept me so late, and I was so discomposed by the interview, that I gave up going to Beechwood, and sent Hugh and Essie alone.

CHAPTER XXXV.

July 23.—Marietta writes word that they are comfortably settled at home; and now she wants me to send Agnes to her as soon as possible. Late events have certainly not been such as would induce me to trust my children away from home. I must think about it. Marietta is always impatient for any plan she takes a fancy to form. She must wait.

Ina has had a most painful letter from her grandmother, and was so upset by it that I much doubted whether she would be equal to dining at the Fowlers. She recovered herself a little, however, as the day wore on. Mrs. Penrhyn writes, as she would be justified in writing if she had not from the beginning urged Ina to make a pretence of feelings which did not exist. She assumes that Ina's acceptance of Lord Hopeton's attentions was voluntary, and reads her a fierce lecture upon the sin of vanity and coquetry; ending with the most touching description of Lord Hopeton's misery, a prophecy of the fatal effects of such a disappointment just at the very turning-point of his life, and a suggestion that, even now, all might be made straight if Ina would reconsider the question; since Lord Hopeton is still devotedly attached to her, and Lady Worthington, though indignant at the treatment he has received, would, perhaps, for his sake, be willing to forget and forgive.

Ina is so little accustomed to censure from her grandmother, that this kind of tirade overwhelms her. And

she has nothing to fall back upon for support; she cannot rest for comfort upon her engagement, since, without Lady Anson's sanction, and mine, it is scarcely real.

I pity, and long to be tender and consoling, but I am tongue-tied; and Ina thinks me unfeeling. Agnes looks on in surprise, asks no questions, but waits upon Ina, and pets her, and is a real Sister of Mercy.

I had given orders in the afternoon that I could see no one. I meant to try what a quiet hour would do as a preparation for the Easthope dinner-party; but, hearing Mrs. Bradshaw's voice at the hall door, I could not resist making an exception in her favour. We have not met since Sir John Anson's death, for she has been engaged in sending off the Colonel and his family. They have left her now, and she is alone again, and rather enjoying the quiet. I fully meant to tell her my worries, but I could not write them; and so I was glad of the opportunity of talking them over with her.

She came prepared to hear of them; for, as usual, rumour has been busy. People think they can keep their family affairs private, and forget that their servants see, and hear, and make comments, as well as themselves, and are not bound to secrecy. That poor Sir John's last attack was brought on by excitement and worry is a fact generally known; and, as Mrs. Bradshaw said—

‘My dear, when people are worried and excited, they quite forget to whisper; and Lady Anson being deaf, and Sir John irritable, I don't doubt they did as much to spread abroad what they had to say to each other, as if they had hired the Westford town-crier for the express purpose. Anyhow, it is suspected, if not known, by many, that Henry Anson and Ina are engaged, and that Lady Anson does not like it.’

‘Anything more than that?’ I asked. ‘You may as well tell me all.’

‘ I don’t see why I should tell you rumours.’

‘ I shall be able to judge whether there is any foundation for them.’

‘ I doubt it: they chiefly concern motives and intentions, of which no one knows anything. It is a fact that Lady Anson is leaving the Manor. It is only the deduction of rumour that she does so because she has quarrelled with her son about his engagement.’

‘ She naturally would leave the Manor,’ I said, ‘ whether her son married or not, because it is his now ; and she probably would not like to hold a secondary position where she has always been first.’

‘ Oh ! but there was a charming little family plan, concocted by Mrs. Harcourt. The Manor is very large, much too large for the estate, which is encumbered with mortgages, and provisions for the three girls ; and so it was proposed—this is what the world says—that when “ sweet Lydia Harcourt,” Lady Anson’s special pet, quite like her own child (I have myself heard Mrs. Harcourt talk of her in this way), married dear Henry, they should all make a common home there ; and it would be so delightful, so harmonious, so inexpensive !’

‘ Well,’ I said, ‘ and what was there to object to in the arrangement, if they liked it ? It does not sound to me wise ; but that is not my concern.’

‘ Only that (remember this is not scandal, but rumour) it was all settled by the elders of the two families, without any reference to the parties—or rather, I should say, party—principally concerned—I mean Henry Anson. Lydia Harcourt was willing, but he never was, and nothing could ever make him willing. The persecution has been going on for years—I can vouch for that, in a small way, myself ; and you know how they treated him about Marietta.’

‘ But I don’t understand,’ I said, ‘ how people with any

refused to see me. I had no alternative. You must let me speak. I would have talked to Neville if he had been here; I did not know he was going. I have not known anything for the last week.'

'It must have been very terrible,' I began.

'Terrible!—you can never know. My mother says—but no matter. My father was dying; and it was she who got the truth out of me, and then told him and excited him. She thought he would have interfered, but he did not; he only bade me make my mother happy.'

'And you will make her happy,' I said; 'you will give her time, and bring her round to the idea by degrees.'

'Then you give your consent? Say so, and I will promise anything you wish.'

'No,' I said, 'I do not give my consent. As I told you in my letter, I will say nothing till you have Lady Anson's sanction.'

'Which I shall never get. But I am independent.'

'Yes,' I said, coldly; 'and so is Ina. If you both choose to act against a mother's expressed wish, you can do so; the law will not interfere.'

He struck his forehead with his hand, as he muttered, 'If they drive me to desperation, I shall do it.'

'There must, however, be two parties to the agreement,' I said; 'and I doubt if Ina will be one.'

He looked ashamed, and, I must confess, weak. He has strong feelings, but feeble resolution; and I felt more than ever that he was not the man to raise Ina.

The conviction gave earnestness to my words, as I said, 'Mr. Anson, my own determination is unalterable; and I am sure you will not give me the pain of enforcing it more decidedly. I cannot see you again under present circumstances; and I need scarcely say that Ina will not. Do not compel me to tell my servant that if Mr. Anson should call, he is not to be admitted.'

It went to my heart to speak in this way to him, for his face was agonised ; and when I paused, there came such a burst of sorrow, that I felt almost as if I must comfort him as my child.

But it was weak sorrow—passionate, hopeless ; there was no energy in it. His threats—if such they might be called—were but a kind of childish vengeance. I saw plainly how it was that he had never been able to take a bold manly part with regard either to Marietta or Ina. Yet when he said he would stand up against his mother, I believed him ; for he is, I suspect, like most weak persons, obstinate ; and the fact of opposition will give him just the strength he needs. I was induced at last to be a little more kind to him ; but I regretted it, for he seized upon my few words of sympathy as encouragement, till I reminded him again how much cause I had to find fault with him, and then he fell once more into despair, and thought I intended to put fresh obstacles in his way."

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I went to Ina directly after the interview, and told her precisely what had passed. I forbore to say all I thought of Henry Anson's weakness, because, as they are actually engaged, it would not be desirable to lead her to look down upon the man who may one day be her husband ; but I said in general terms that I did not desire the marriage, and that it would be most distressing to me if the engagement were carried out in opposition to Lady Anson's wishes. I added also that I believed the only right thing for them to do was to practise patience and submission.

At any rate, they must expect no co-operation or sanction from me. Whatever they did would be done by themselves, upon their own responsibility.

I don't think Ina liked this. Fond as she is of having her own way, she still likes to shelter herself under the approval of another; and I believe I put a more effectual barrier in her path by throwing the *onus* of her actions upon herself, than I could possibly have done by attempting to control or dictate to her. Neither did she like the way in which I spoke of the marriage. She said that 'she was sure that I did not understand Henry Anson, or do him justice. As for herself, she was not like Marietta; she could not cast herself down before her husband and let him drive a Juggernaut car over her;'—which was simply exaggerating and distorting the very little I had said. No one can feel more strongly than myself that a woman is bound to have an independent judgment, and to assist her husband by putting it before him, instead of becoming his mental slave. But, at the same time, to marry a man whom one cannot look up to as being wiser and better than oneself, is, to my mind, a species of moral suicide. By forcing a woman into an unnatural position, it must ultimately mar, even if it should not destroy, her gentleness and humility. I do not see, in fact, how 'the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit' can exist in the case of a wife who takes the upper hand, and governs her husband. But all this is merely my own feeling. I can't pretend to judge for others; only, as a dear old friend of mine once said to me, when we had been discussing the intricacies of a course of love which certainly did not 'run smooth,' 'My dear, marrying and giving in marriage is a most remarkable thing!'

CHAPTER XXXIV.

July 14.—John Penrhyn has written very kindly and considerately, and apparently without the slightest feeling of pique. He has seen Mr. Sandham—Charlie's tutor that is to be—and now I may send my boy to London as soon as I please. John proposes that he should go up on Thursday, when Frank Neville will be returning home. He promises me to see him often and look after him. I wish he would leave him alone, but I cannot say so. I suppose I must agree; but I don't want Charlie to go yet, and leave Hugh by himself—not that they will care much, for he and Essie are inseparable. Essie's taste for natural history has lately developed in rather an awkward way. Her delight is in spiders, and she and Hugh have regular battles with the housemaid in their defence. I have promised that when she has gained a certain sum by the marks in her register, I will add something more to it, to enable her to buy a microscope; and with this inducement she really works hard. But I begin to feel the difficulties of my complicated duties, and how next to impossible it is to attend to any one set thoroughly. Whilst I have been vexed about Ina and perplexed about Charlie, it has been hard work to keep Essie at regular work. And then there are duties to society. We have been invited to dine with the Fowlers on the 23rd, and I have declined so often that I feel obliged to accept the invitation; but Ina will go unwillingly, and be dull herself, and make others so. She does not understand rousing

herself to be agreeable upon duty. Her motto is, that cheerfulness must be natural and spontaneous, or it ceases to be cheerfulness. Very plausible! but as persons go on in life, if they were only cheerful in manner when they felt cheerful at heart, they would be very burdensome to their neighbours.

July 20.—Charlie has gone; Frank with him. Charlie is resigned to his fate, but he pines for John Penrhyn, and looks forward to seeing him in London as his chief pleasure. Agnes gives him silent sympathy. I say nothing, and feel in a measure guilty of marring his happiness. When the boys were departed, I left Agnes with Ina, who is always affectionate when there is any trouble. Agnes will be able to pour out her heart to her sister as she cannot to me, knowing that I do not quite take her view of matters. Frank Neville is a great loss, but I am rejoiced that he is still Charlie's friend. He is just the boy to keep Charlie up to work, and to laugh him out of over-fastidiousness and false refinement.

In the afternoon, just as I was setting off for Beechwood, with Hugh and Essie, Miss Anson was announced. The name gave me quite a turn. My cold manner must at once have shown her what I thought, for she began, in her abrupt yet rather taking way—

‘Mrs. Anstruther, I am come to make my peace with you.’

‘I am glad,’ I said, ‘Miss Anson, that you are willing to own that this is necessary. But perhaps you are come to make some explanation. The case requires it.’

‘Oh no!’ she exclaimed. ‘I make no explanations. I don’t think they are ever of the slightest use; and Harry assures me he and Ina have told you everything.’

‘I hope, and I conclude, they have,’ was my reply.

‘It was very wrong in me, I daresay,’ she continued; ‘but I never can resist helping two poor creatures to

understand each other, when they are about to fly off at a tangent. And if I had not spoken to Ina as I did, she would infallibly have entangled herself with Lord Hopeton. And you know that would have been ten times worse than engaging herself to Harry, for she did not care an iota for him. She would only have been led into it by Mrs. Penrhyn.'

'I am not going to enter into the question of Ina's entanglement with anyone,' I said. 'You may have had the best motives, Miss Anson, for what you did; but you cannot deny that, believing that Sir John and Lady Anson would object to the engagement, you still encouraged your cousin, and assisted him in carrying on a secret understanding with Ina; whilst, still further, you sanctioned Ina's apparent preference for Lord Hopeton, when privately you knew she was attached to Mr. Anson. I don't know what you may call this, but there is a very awkward word which I should apply to it—clandestine.'

Miss Anson coloured crimson.

'I was not prepared for this,' she said.

'No,' I replied, 'I am sure you were not prepared for it. Persons who meddle in affairs of this kind are seldom prepared for the construction which the world puts upon their conduct. By your advice and assistance, you have led Ina to say and do things which must stamp her as a heartless coquette in the eyes of Lady Worthington, and——'

'But what could I have done?' she exclaimed, interrupting me. 'Was I to see Ina throwing herself away upon that scamp, Lord Hopeton, when I knew that an honest, honourable man like my cousin Harry loved her to desperation?'

'If Mr. Anson loved Ina,' I said, 'it was his business to say so, not yours. And as regards Lord Hopeton, if you had reason to think him what you state, you might

have found means to open Ina's eyes, without attempting to manœuvre. But what I find fault with, Miss Anson, even more than with anything which passed at Arling, is the assistance—the clandestine assistance—which you gave to Mr. Anson and Ina here, on the day of the Headington picnic. And before that, your conduct was not honourable; you endeavoured to deceive me—and you did deceive me.'

A half smile played round Miss Anson's lips.

'Dear Mrs. Anstruther, you must forgive me. I really can't see my naughtiness quite in the light you do, and so I can't be as penitent as I ought to be. It was just a little amusement.'

'Sport to you, and death to me,' I said, gravely. 'When Lady Anson complains, as she unquestionably will, that Ina engaged herself secretly, what am I to say?'

'Poor dear Lady Anson! she will make a fuss for the time, but it will pass over: I know her better than you do. And Harry is quite independent of his mother. You need not trouble yourself in the least about that.'

'Is it quite impossible, Miss Anson,' I exclaimed impatiently, 'to make you comprehend what it is which really touches me in this matter? Let Ina marry Mr. Anson, or let her not—I put that question entirely aside—she has compromised herself by the way in which the engagement has been formed.'

'Only with one or two persons. The world generally is not so particular,' was the reply. 'And the real fact of the matter is, that if things had not been done as they were, Ina would never have been engaged to Harry at all. Lady Anson and Mrs. Harcourt would have moved heaven and earth to make him pledge himself to his father to marry Lydia Harcourt. It was that which they were always aiming at; and when at length the fact of his en-

gagement to Ina came out, it was only because they urged and tormented him so, and told him that the marriage with Lydia was Sir John's dying wish.'

'Mr. Anson said nothing of this to me,' I observed.

'Oh no! poor Harry! He never says more about anything than he can help; he is always afraid of getting into scrapes. And he really was in a difficulty, for he had given a kind of half-promise to his mother that he would think about Lydia, just before he went to Worthington. So dreadfully miserable he was! I should have been a wretch if I had not helped him.'

'Your opinion of what constitutes what you call "a wretch" differs from mine,' I said. 'I believe that there is no disgrace like that of deception.'

Miss Anson paused before answering; then she said:

'I can't pretend to be what I am not, Mrs. Anstruther. I have done your daughter good service, though in a way which you don't like: *that* I am sorry for. I don't ask you to forgive me, because I don't suppose you will; but I hope you will shake hands with me.'

She held out her hand, which I just took, and then allowed to drop.

'And this is to be our footing for the future?' she said, with somewhat of regret in her voice.

I bowed, and she bowed; and then she turned away, and I rang the bell for the servant to open the door.

So ended our most disagreeable interview. I am not satisfied; I did not say what I intended to say, and what I did say produced no effect. I doubt whether any words would really have made an impresssion upon an off-hand, surface-principled woman like Miss Anson. Very good-natured she is, I daresay; that is, what the world calls good-natured. She will work to please others, when it happens to please herself; but as for refinement, delicacy, high-mindedness—she does not know what the words

lasts, then, in most cases,' I said, 'till twelve o'clock on the night preceding her twenty-first birthday, and when the clock strikes cease.'

'You put it strongly; but the law sees it in that light.'

'I am not talking of law,' I replied—and I am afraid I spoke rather impatiently.

'But I am; so don't let us misunderstand each other. All that I say is, that when the law, which must, for the time being, have a certain moral authority, recognises a child as being of full age, the parents must, of necessity, recognise it also; and that the part of wisdom then is to yield to the necessity willingly.'

'Of course I must yield,' I said, 'so far that if Henry Anson and Ina choose to marry, they can and will.'

'But let it be more than that. Think what a load you lay upon your poor Ina's conscience if you compel her to keep her engagement without your sanction.'

'I do not compel. She is at liberty to do as she likes.'

'No, begging your pardon. She has engaged herself—whether wisely or unwisely; she is pledged.'

'Then let her keep her pledge—she can do it without me.'

'But she cannot do it honourably, happily, with the approbation of her own conscience. See in what a dilemma you place her.'

'She has brought it upon herself,' I said.

'Yes, she has. I don't defend her for a moment. All I say is that, knowing what burdens of self-reproach we all, more or less, heap up for ourselves as we journey through life—burdens which will surely lay heavy upon us on our death-bed—I would myself earnestly desire never to add to those which are in store for young people, by giving a command which they can and must neglect, or refusing a sanction which they can and will lawfully do without. I don't say that there are no instances in which this is un-

avoidable. No doubt extreme cases will arise when a parent is called upon to exercise a moral authority, which the law won't uphold—though even then I recognise a limit. But it does seem to me that this is not such a case. If there is anything against Henry Anson's character, let it be told: Ina will then see herself why you oppose the marriage. If not, then surely Lady Anson's prejudice is no sufficient cause for forcing these young things into deceit, and perhaps—who can tell? leading them to make a runaway match.'

'Never, never!' I exclaimed: 'Ina could not.'

'I don't say "could not" for anyone. I believe we one and all could, under certain circumstances, do things which, in calmer moments, would make our hair stand on end even to think of.'

The words startled me. I paused and thought. Then I said, 'But it is impossible for me to allow Lady Anson and the world generally to suppose that I approve of all that has been done.'

'No one wishes you to do so,' said Mrs. Bradshaw; 'myself least of all. Trust to me, to let the world know what you think, or rather trust to yourself. Make these young people wait. Try all you can to soften poor Lady Anson's—what shall I call it?—not flinty heart, it has not strength and consistency enough for flint—but, at any rate, her heart that won't be softened. Look grave, and preach, and be miserable, as you will; but make no vows, and no threats.'

'And so let them be married, and live happy ever after,' I said, attempting to smile. 'I believe, at the bottom of my heart, that is what I most wish.'

'As to the living happy,' replied Mrs. Bradshaw, 'I prophesy nothing. There is a Nemesis that is certain to overtake a marriage which has had a wrong twist at its commencement. Family jars are a lifelong inheritance;

and Ina will find it so. To enter a family unwelcomed is no preparation for happiness.'

'Unwelcomed and unhonoured,' I said; 'that is my bitterness. Ina has given cause for the hard things which will be said of her. Poor child! and she really so little intends to do wrong.'

'She is a Penrhyn,' said Mrs. Bradshaw.

And I began to think that, after all, that might be the real clue to Ina's inconsistent and perplexing character.

July 24.—A most unpleasant remembrance of yesterday I have; first the conversation with Mrs. Bradshaw, which disturbed and upset me, because it shook the foundation of my conviction; and next the dinner-party at Easthope. After all, Ina could not go; she had such a very bad headache; and I was obliged to take Agnes, who does not profess to be what people call 'out;' but I mean her to glide into the state by degrees. It was an effort to her to go, and I really felt for her. Dinner-parties in this neighbourhood are insufferably dull; and though the Fowlers are good-natured people, they never are able to get beyond seating their friends in a circle, and talking in an undertone. I believe myself that an English dinner-party would be much more agreeable if the low rumble of a kettle-drum could go on all the time. We should have less reason then to fear the sound of our own voices.

Mrs. Harcourt was there, and supremely stiff, almost rude. I did not choose to notice it, but she certainly would not have spoken to me if she could possibly have avoided it. This sort of thing does not trouble me, as it would have done in former days, when I was just beginning to gain a footing in the neighbourhood. Mrs. Harcourt and I meet upon equal ground now, and I can afford to laugh at rudeness, especially when, as in this case, it is based upon personal pique.

But there was a good deal of awkward, unconscious conversation carried on by other people; and, with Mrs. Harcourt's eyes fixed upon me whilst she interposed some meaning sarcastic remark, I really did very earnestly wish myself at home.

The actual dinner time did very well. I sat next the Rector, and had a good deal of parish talk with him. One thing strikes me greatly; he is so much softened lately, so much less narrow and angular; his human sympathies are so enlarged. To have married a good wife would, doubtless, have been an excellent thing for him; but I have arrived at the conclusion that the next best thing to that, in his case, is to have missed one. He was too good to be hardened by it; he sees everything too directly as the ordering of God's love.

His feeling for Marietta brought out, I suspect, the hidden tenderness which before he was scarcely conscious of; and as it was not permitted to expand itself upon her, it has found a vent in a more general sympathy. He turns to me cordially, for he knows I understand him; and he is especially kind to Agnes, whom he prepared for Confirmation the year before last, and has since then adopted as one of his peculiar charges. Shy as she is with the world generally, she is not shy with him. I believe there is a kind of freemasonry in natural simplicity of character which makes those who possess it at ease with one another, in spite of all differences of age, or sex, or position. I always know at once the persons whom Agnes will get on with; they are those who give one a sense of truthfulness and transparency. Whatever they may be in other respects, these qualities make intercourse easy. I was quite amused to hear how confidently she gave her opinion when the Rector appealed to her upon some little matter connected with the Sunday-school, in which she has lately become a teacher. She spoke out

quite archly and merrily, and ventured entirely to differ from him.

The trying time was, as it always is, after dinner, when the ladies went to the drawing-room, and servants and babies were brought upon the *tapis* for discussion. Mrs. Fowler was deeply interested in the destination of the Manor servants. Were they to stay or to go? Would Mr. Anson keep up as large an establishment as his father? Would Lady Anson take the butler with her? The queries were all based upon what appeared to be an ascertained fact—that Lady Anson was going away. But when? How soon? I longed to ask the question, but did not dare. I turned over some photographs, and listened. Mrs. Harcourt was at some little distance from me, but I could not help suspecting she intended me to hear her replies.

‘Indeed,’ she said, heaving a deep sigh, and playing with her jet chain, ‘I can tell nothing at present; the shock has been so sudden, and the circumstances are so distressing. Dear Lady Anson had looked forward to spending her last days at the Manor; and kind, good Sir John had never anticipated any other arrangement.’

‘It is a very unexpected move,’ observed Mrs. Fowler; ‘so very speedy. One might have supposed it would be necessary by-and-by, in the event of Mr. Anson’s marriage, but not yet.’

‘Even then it might have been arranged for her to remain,’ was the reply; ‘with a large house, ample space, and such a united family as they were, and Henry Anson so entirely his mother’s pet. But trials are good for us, no doubt. Dear Lady Anson has a large share.’

‘I heard,’ said Mrs. Fowler, lowering her voice, and drawing her chair closer to Mrs. Harcourt, ‘that there had been some terrible misunderstanding between Lady Anson and her son. My maid told me that they had not

dined together since the funeral. But I suppose that can't be true.'

'Poor thing! she has been very unhappy,' was Mrs. Harcourt's ambiguous reply.

'And can it really be that he has engaged himself to some one whom his mother does not like?' inquired Mrs. Fowler.

'Excuse me: I am too much in the family confidence to answer; I can only say'—and Mrs. Harcourt glanced at me, and raised her voice a little—'that whatever may be the truth or falsehood of the facts as they have been brought to you, there can be no doubt that Henry Anson has been a dupe; he is a most excellent, estimable young man in himself: the sin lies with his advisers and supporters.'

I had the most vehement impulse to rush into the conversation, confront Mrs. Harcourt, and compel her to explain her words. But, of course, I restrained myself, and she went on.

'Dear Lady Anson goes to the neighbourhood of London: that is all I am at liberty to state at present. I believe she will have a house at Norwood, so that her two younger daughters may have masters.'

'A great change from the Manor,' sighed good-natured Mrs. Fowler.

'A terrible, grievous change!' groaned Mrs. Harcourt.

'And when will she go? Soon?'

'Impossible to say—as to the house at Norwood; but she leaves the Manor immediately. She must leave it.' Again there was a glance at me.

'Poor thing! How very sad! Will she go abroad?'

'I believe not.'

'When one thinks of it,' persisted Mrs. Fowler, 'she could scarcely leave England till her affairs are all settled. How she will miss you!'

‘I may be with her for a week or so, if Mr. Harcourt can spare me,’ was the reply; ‘and no doubt he will make the sacrifice for the sake of an old friend, whose position awakens such deep sympathy.’

At that moment the gentlemen entered the room, and I heard no more. But later in the evening I observed Mrs. Harcourt and Mrs. Fowler again in close conversation; and when I took my leave of the latter, there was a very marked coldness in her manner towards me. Even Agnes noticed it, and asked if I had done anything to offend Mrs. Fowler, for she was so very stiff.

To this I could only give the general answer, that ‘people were frequently stiff without being aware of it;’ and Agnes suggested it might be the natural effect of the atmosphere of a dinner-party—‘the dullest, most wearisome, make-believe pleasure she had ever known. Would it be her duty to go to any more?’

Alas! I could give her no hope of escaping them, especially, I said, if she went to Chilhurst; for the Nevilles are compelled to give a great many dinner-parties (it is the only kind of society known in that neighbourhood), especially in the hunting season.

‘And she was going to Chilhurst, then!’ Her tired eyes sparkled with delight. ‘She would bear dinner-parties, evening-parties, parties of any kind, for the pleasure of being with Marietta. And it never could be dull there: it was never dull at Woodleigh. Mr. Penrhyn and Mr. Neville made her laugh more than any persons she had ever known.’

Ah, yes! but Mr. Penrhyn would not be at Chilhurst. I was obliged to remind her of that; and Mr. Neville is certainly not likely to awaken much merriment when left to himself.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

August 8.—Short views in life! They are certainly helpful. I have had a month's rest, and in that time events have shaped themselves—so, at least, one says in that kind of heathenish phraseology which one uses without consideration. Lady Anson has not made a sudden removal from the Manor, as the world declared she would be compelled to do: I have not that evil upon my conscience in any form. She has simply gone with Edith to see an old friend at Norwood; and the two younger girls, with Miss Davis, their governess, are left at home.

Henry Anson has kept his word—he has made no attempt to communicate with Ina. I give him full credit for this honourable conduct—it raises my opinion of him; and it has been helpful to me, for it has given me time to determine my own line of conduct. Mrs. Bradshaw's warnings against attempting to interfere where I have no authority are, no doubt, wise; yet I still feel that I cannot be called upon to give my sanction to the engagement until at least some attempt has been made to induce Lady Anson to give hers. At the present moment, such an attempt is out of the question; in her state of grief, it would be cruel. Henry Anson must consent to leave her at peace for a twelvemonth. Respect for his father's memory requires that he should not marry within that time. He must urge his mother to let all things remain as they are for the present, and not to think of moving from the Manor; and he must assure her that it is my wish that

the engagement between himself and Ina should, for the time named, be considered as null ; which means that they should not meet, or correspond, as persons engaged.

When I have made these stipulations, I shall be satisfied, and I will say openly to Lady Anson—and, in fact, to everyone—that at the end of the twelvemonth, if the young people continue in the same mind, I shall not, unless something quite unforeseen should arise, interpose any further obstacles to the marriage.

What the result of this delay may be none can prophesy. If it should end in breaking off the marriage, I cannot say that I shall be sorry. Ina is young, and has seen very few really first-rate men, otherwise I do not believe she could possibly have given her heart to a mere good-natured boy (for he really is nothing more) like Henry Anson. During this delay, Lady Anson and Mrs. Harcourt, if they are wise, will let Henry alone. There is one thing which will ensure the marriage, and that is opposition. The only misgiving I have in making this decision is, whether Mrs. Penrhyn may not take advantage of the delay to bring Lord Hopeton forward again. That would be a tenfold greater evil than a marriage with Henry Anson, which, as the world argues, is no evil at all.

August 9.—Henry Anson came to me, as I expected, this morning. ‘His month’s trial was over,’ he said, and he demanded an interview with Ina. I refused it. He was extremely angry, and it was very long before I could get him to listen to a word of reason. He went over the old ground, and so did I ; and, like all angry people, he would twist my words to a wrong meaning, and assert that I was bent upon separating them for ever, because I insisted upon separation for a twelvemonth. I told him again and again that if, at the end of a year, he and Ina remained of the same mind, I would interpose no further obstacles ; but my words seemed to pass by him unregarded. He

could think of nothing but the present. Persistence, however, gained the day. He left me, at last, bitterly complaining of the way in which I had treated him, but, I think, fully persuaded that he had nothing to do but to submit.

The awkwardness is, that I can say nothing about their not meeting—because, living in the same village, they inevitably will meet. I can only insist that there shall be no engagement and no correspondence. If I can possibly manage it, I must send Ina away, at least for a time. I wish she was going to Chilhurst instead of Agnes. With her calmer mind she is, however, better able than Henry Anson to understand the necessities of the case. She sees that, as things are, I cannot recognise the engagement; and that, until I can do so, she and Henry must be on the footing of ordinary acquaintances. I expected, I confess, to find her more distressed at these difficulties, but I suspect she is relieved by having no concealments. She professes full confidence in Mr. Anson's affection, and asserts her own to be unalterable; but there is something—I can scarcely say what—in her tone and manner, which makes me feel that she is not really very deeply in love.

When all this was settled, I went to my room to do the most unpleasant thing of the whole—write to Lady Anson. How many sheets of paper I tore up before I could satisfy myself, I should be ashamed to reckon; and, at the last, I sent my letter merely because I was out of heart, and unable to think of anything better—not at all because I thought I had said what I ought. This is the copy:—

‘DEAR LADY ANSON,—I will make no excuses for intruding upon you in the midst of your grief—though I well know how great it must be—for the subject I have to bring before you is one which cannot be set aside without causing pain to yourself, as well as to others. Our

children have, without our knowledge, entered into a marriage engagement. This fact must distress us equally; it has caused me the very deepest regret, and I do not doubt that you share my feelings. We had a right to expect that they would act openly, and they have not done so. I do not attempt to defend them. But the past is irrevocable: the question is, what is to be done for the future?

‘Mr. Anson tells me that you refuse your consent to the marriage; he does not give me the reason. I also, for the present, refuse mine; but it is because you do not give yours. I cannot allow my daughter to enter your family unwelcomed and against your wishes—I cannot do so, at least, without making an effort to remove the difficulties which weigh so strongly in your mind against the marriage. If you will tell me your objections, I will either answer them, or, if they are unanswerable, I will put them before my daughter, and endeavour to induce her, of her own accord, to break off the engagement which she has so hastily and unwisely entered into. More than this I cannot do: Ina is but my step-daughter, and she is of age. In a question in which her own happiness is so deeply concerned, she must judge and act for herself. Should it be that the difficulties which suggest themselves to you should not appear such to myself, I will still undertake that the young people shall in no way meet or correspond, as if pledged to each other, for another twelvemonth. I have obtained their promise on this point, and I am quite sure they will keep it. At the expiration of that time, I shall feel that I have stretched my authority (which is moral, not legal) to the utmost; and, if they should still continue in the same mind, I shall consider myself no longer at liberty to interpose any obstacles to the marriage.

‘I can only repeat how deeply I lament that a matter of

this kind, connected with myself, should have arisen to add to your trial at a moment of such heavy sorrow; and I trust you will believe in the assurance of my true sympathy, and allow me to add my earnest hope that, notwithstanding the anxieties which at present press upon you, you may ultimately see all things settled in the manner most plainly conducive to your own happiness, and that of your children.

‘ I am, dear Lady Anson,

‘ Very truly yours,

‘ M. ANSTRUTHER.’

August 10.—A note from the Manor.

Dernham Manor: August 10.

‘ Lady Anson presents her compliments to Mrs. Anstruther, and begs to acknowledge the receipt of a letter, to which, in her present state of grief, she feels herself quite unable to reply. She can only request that a subject so painful may not again be brought before her.’

War to the knife, evidently! I don’t know that I expected anything better, but it gives me a grievous heart-ache. I wonder whether I have done right. Would my husband have thought it right? I ask myself this again and again, still without being able to discover how I could have written or acted differently.

Now, what I have to do is to send Ina away. She must go with Agnes to Chilhurst, whether it is convenient to Marietta or not; I must ask it as a favour. Arling is out of the question. Yet what a help Mrs. Penrhyn might be to me, if I could but trust her! Mrs. Huddersfield, who has chosen Cromer instead of Westford, might, perhaps, receive her for a month; and I so far give her credit for sincerity, that, if she promised me not to bring forward the Hopeton affair again, I think she would keep her word. But there would be no protection, in that

case, against Mrs. Penrhyn's manoeuvring; so I must not risk it.

August 15.—Marietta says 'yes,' but it is scarcely a cordial yes. The house is to be very full. Mrs. West, a sister of Lady Worthington's, lives close to them. Lord Hopeton may possibly be in the neighbourhood. She is afraid it will be awkward. And not one word or message from Mr. Neville!—only a postscript, which, coming from Marietta, is very significant:—

'Edward is severe in his judgement upon poor dear Ina's conduct, which has been exhibited to him in the worst colours. She must be prepared for this, and be careful. He would be dreadfully worried if any more difficulties were to arise whilst she is with us.'

Very natural! Marietta dreads the position of Ina's chaperone—or, at any rate, Mr. Neville dreads it for her. The poor child has gained herself a much worse reputation than she deserves; but it is always the case when young people are imprudent, even in small ways.

Perplexed and anxious though I am, I must not forget to note, as a matter for thankfulness, a most satisfactory account of Charlie from his tutor, and a very merry, happy letter from Hugh, who went back to school about a fortnight ago. He tells me that he had a 'jolly time' in the holidays; which delights my heart, for I am always afraid lest the boys may find home dull. Mr. Pierce, he adds, speaks well of his mathematics, and already talks of his getting a Cambridge scholarship. Hugh is greatly inspired by the idea, for Frank Neville has inoculated him with the ambition of doing something for himself as soon as possible, and lessening my heavy expenses. After all, these boys can do more with one another than anyone else can. I might have talked to Hugh for weeks, and I never should have stirred him up as Frank has done. I believe it is the American, Jacob Abbot, who says that the strongest

influence in the world is that exerted by a child of three years old upon the little one a year younger; the one is incessantly imitating and following the other.

August 21.—Thinking, and planning, and knocking down plans is very weary work. I really have not been able to make up my mind to accept Marietta's uncordial invitation for Ina. I cannot put myself under an obligation to Mr. Neville, though I could to her; that is to say, I cannot unless there is absolutely no alternative. It would be odious, also, to be in the neighbourhood of Lady Worthington's sister, after all the reports and gossip which, I suspect, have spread and are spreading. I had a note from Bessie Penrhyn to-day—very sympathising and kind, but greatly regretting the unkind things which are said of Ina;—things which, no doubt, come round to Lady Anson through Lady Worthington, and increase her prejudice. Agnes, I have arranged, shall go to Chilhurst—nothing preventing—next week. There is no danger to be feared for her! She is not likely to flirt. The last idea which has suggested itself, as regards Ina, is that of letting the cottage for some months, and going abroad. But who will take it? These things can't be done in a moment; and it is impossible for me to think of moving unless the cottage is let. I should, indeed, go on Ina's account, and she could very well bear the additional expense; but I cannot suggest it, and she is not likely to think of offering it. Young people so little understand how money is spent in moving about; and Ina is just beginning to enjoy her riches (for, as a mere girl, she is rich), and I shrink from any appearance of interference with her private affairs. She has always had a good allowance; and I have taught her that money is a responsibility; and she is extremely liberal, subscribes to societies without number, helps everyone who asks her, and gives largely to Mr. L'Estrange for the needs of the parish; but it

must all be done in her own way. She listens very respectfully to any suggestions I may make; but she would rather buy her own experience, and therefore I leave her to do so. And, again, she is munificently generous to the persons she loves: she will make splendid presents, out of all proportion to the necessity of the case; and, before long, I expect to hear that she is absolutely poor in consequence; but she does not like to be reminded of common duties, or to be troubled with uninteresting claims merely because they are just. She would delight in giving me a velvet dress for next winter, which I shall not have the opportunity of wearing more than two or three times; but it would never enter her head to offer that if we went abroad she should take half the expense of lodgings. It is a habit of mind which I doubt much if I shall ever be able to alter. I see it so continually in persons of mature age, in whom there is not the slightest idea of acting in any way selfishly. So long as they give, they do not apparently trouble themselves how they give; and, as a rule, they are so liked, and praised, and, indeed, loved, for their generosity, that I don't see how their eyes are ever to be opened to the fact that there is something higher than generosity—and that is, justice. The difficulty with Ina and myself is one of position; she is comparatively rich, and I am comparatively poor. Strictly speaking, she ought to feel this, and to recognise a claim of duty in consequence; but if I bring it before her, it must insensibly give her an uncomfortable impression of me. And this has been the case from the beginning. I have never taken all that others would have given me, because I am her sole guardian, and I have had all the power in my own hands. As I have never been able to show her my own claims, so no other person has been able to do so for me. Mrs. Penrhyn might have been an assistance, but, with her feeling

of enmity, it was not to be expected that she would be. Only the other day, when it was a question of Charlie's going to London, it would have been the greatest possible comfort if Ina had come forward with a proposal to give something regularly towards his expenses; instead of which, she gave him a cheque for £20, with which he was enchanted, and which he proposed to spend in all kinds of useless ways; and I was obliged to say how kind and thoughtful she was, feeling all the time that the possession of so much money was just the very thing to encourage Charlie in his naturally extravagant habits. Agnes did suggest at last that he should put some of it by as a nucleus in the savings bank, but Ina would not hear of it. She said she had given it to him to spend, and she wished it to be spent; and, after that, what could Agnes or I do? I would not for the world say this to anyone,—it would seem so hard and unkind to Ina, who really is charming in her generosity; and, after all, the fault must, in a measure, be mine. I often think that I might have given her a clearer notion of the claims of money if I had checked her in her taste for making unnecessarily handsome presents, and shown her how much can be done by simple and useful ones. But the difficulty was, that she had few friends on whom to indulge her fancies, and the presents were most frequently for myself or the children; and to have checked her would have seemed cold and ungracious. I tried to teach her to spend her money wisely—I know I did; but, perhaps, not enough—not constantly. Anyhow, I have failed, and Ina will require a long experience to teach her that generosity is only generous when it is reasonable and self-denying.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

August 22.—‘A friend in need is a friend indeed.’ How entirely I may say that of Mrs. Bradshaw! I don’t think there has ever been a case of great difficulty, since I have first known her, in which, if we have been together, she has not done something, more or less, to assist me. And now she has come forward at the precise moment, and in the precise way which I could most desire. I went to see her yesterday—I was really wanting advice. The more I thought of Ina’s remaining here the less right it seemed, and the more I thought of her going away the less practicable it appeared. I felt that I must tell out my difficulties to some one, and that some one could only be Mrs. Bradshaw. If she could not help me, at least she would sympathise with and understand me; and very often sympathy is nine-tenths of the aid one needs. She received me, as she always does when she perceives I am really worried, with the most tender kindness, telling me that it did her more good than anything else could to see me; for she had been lonely and cross, and had quarrelled, first with her cat, and then with her maid, and then with her dinner, and at last, worst of all, was upon the point of quarrelling with herself;—but my coming would set everything right.

‘Then you will be set right by a very ignorant and helpless mortal,’ I said, ‘wandering in a labyrinth of worries.’

‘And when is it ever otherwise in this world?’ she

replied. 'I am sure I don't know. Here am I, fretted into a nervous fever because my servants can't agree. But never mind them. Let me hear what is the matter with you. Ina, of course, is at the bottom of the trouble.'

'Yes, of course, poor child! She can't help it; but she has tied a Gordian knot for me. I ought to go away with her, and I don't see how or where; and I think and think till I have scarcely an idea left in my head.'

'These young things,' said Mrs. Bradshaw: 'how little they understand that great walls tumble down because little stones are moved! I suppose it never entered her head that her folly could affect you.'

'She has been just as blind as I might have been at her age,' I said, 'and if she has been less open, why, I suppose, I must attribute it to her natural disposition. I must not let you be hard upon her.'

'My dear friend, you must let me speak the truth, or I can't speak at all. If your comfortable little household is to be disturbed because Ina has got herself into a difficulty which she might have avoided, why I must be hard upon her;—that is, if saying that she is a very provoking girl, which I do say, is being hard. In my private opinion, it is much less than she deserves.'

'Granted, then, that she is provoking,' I replied; 'still all one can think of now is, what is to be done? You know, I have given my written word to Lady Anson that the engagement shall be null and void for a year.'

'And Lady Anson has not had the grace to thank you for it. If you were anything but what you are, you would send for a special license and have the young people married forthwith to spite her. But that is an aside—not intended for your virtuous ears.'

I laughed, as I said, 'I am afraid I should spite myself also by that means. The one hope I have of keeping my mind at rest is by not giving way to any personal feelings

in this matter. And since Lady Anson objects, it is right that time should be given her to consider the question. At any rate, I must and will keep my word: and here is my trouble. Henry and Ina live in the same village. I can't allow them to be constantly meeting; and he is not likely to go away; so I must,—and it must be for at least six months.'

Mrs. Bradshaw started. 'They are two provoking idiots! Go away for six months! My dear, I shall be found drowned in the fish-pond before you return. Winter coming on; the Manor all but shut up; Mrs. Harcourt stiffened with pride and disappointment, so that it would require a sledge hammer to break her to pieces; the Rector mourning for his lost love; Captain Shaw meditating upon nothing but Jeremy Taylor's "Holy Dying!"—I can't stand it. Wherever you go I must follow.'

'Must you, indeed?' I exclaimed: 'that would be a delightful "*must*."'

'Stop. You take me up so quickly. I am out of breath. Did I say "*must*?"'

'Yes, indeed you did; but then, unfortunately, you didn't mean it.'

'Stay again. I don't know what I mean, I never do at first. All I know is, that there is a residuum of truth at the bottom. This place will be intolerable without you. But then, where do you intend to go?'

'Nowhere,' I replied. 'I wish many things, but I can't intend any; and for the reason, that a move is too expensive. Charlie's fancy for India is a great drain upon me now; though one hopes it will all be repaid in the end: but tutors are not to be had for nothing.'

'And you would send him to live with the tutor, instead of letting him share lodgings with John Penrhyn. I never could quite see the sense of that.'

‘Because there is no sense in it,’ I said, ‘only a conviction—a prejudice—whatever you choose to call it. I don’t wish him to be always with John Penrhyn. But if I have done wrong, I am punished for it; for it is just this which makes it so difficult for me to make a move now when it is necessary.’

Mrs. Bradshaw thought for a moment. ‘Where should you go, if you could?’

‘Abroad;—partly for economy, partly for the advantage of languages for the girls.’

‘The economy I doubt. The languages no doubt are important. But abroad is indefinite.’

‘It must be some place near, because travelling with numbers tells so much in expense. It did cross my mind that Boulogne would do. It has a better reputation than it used to have.’

‘Better for character, worse for cheapness; but, as you say, it is near, which would make up in the long run for any extra expense in housekeeping.’

‘I don’t see,’ I said, ‘where else I could go as easily. Germany would be desirable in some ways. Heidelberg, people say, is pleasant and cheap; but the distance is an objection, and it must be very cold in winter.’

‘And one must either be frozen or suffocated. I love you a great deal better than you think for; but, in spite of what some people say, I doubt if any love not indigenous to *Vaterland* would survive the infliction of a German stove for six months. No, I can’t follow you there.’

‘And you would follow me to Boulogne?’

‘Would I? I can’t say. I would do something, but I can’t exactly promise that it would be that.’

‘I don’t understand.’

‘How should you? I am not sure that I quite understand myself—I have an idea. Do you look upon ideas as temptations or guides?’

‘Guides, certainly.’

‘But then they may be only will-o’-the-wisps; they may lead you into a quicksand. Perhaps I shall do better to let mine wait and test it. You know the old saying, “Think three times: if the first and the second thought agree, follow that; if the first and the third, follow that.” In the meantime, tell me—about this matter of expense—I don’t wish to be inquisitive; but surely, if you are going for Ina’s sake, she ought to bear the brunt of it. She can well afford it.’

‘The misfortune is,’ I said, ‘that, although I am going for Ina’s sake, I am doing just the very thing she will dislike. And it will be hard to make her pay for her own punishment.’

‘You think it will be like making that Athenian—what was his name?—Phocion—buy his own poison; but Ina is not Phocion, and I should have no compunction in making her buy a scourge with which to scourge herself.’

‘But who is to suggest it?’ I said. ‘I cannot; and the plan will naturally appear to be mine—formed and carried out for my own pleasure.’

‘Will it?’ asked Mrs. Bradshaw. ‘But, do you know, it strikes me that this is just what it ought not to appear?’

‘Would you have me tell her, then, that I think it right to keep her and Henry Anson apart, and therefore I take her abroad?’

‘Certainly; I have not the slightest faith in concealments. Young people are wonderfully lynx-eyed; and to endeavour to hide things from them only makes them suspicious and irritable. If, as a pretence, you tell a child to run out in the garden and play, it knows directly that you want to speak of things it is not to hear; and desires, in revenge, to find out what the things are.’

‘I believe you are right,’ I said; ‘and I suppose I must tell Ina exactly how the case stands.’

‘And that you are not going for your pleasure, but for her good.’

‘Query—will she consider it good?’

‘Never mind; she trusts and loves you sufficiently to believe, at any rate, that you think it good.’

‘Possibly; but still, am I to say, “Now, dear Ina, you are called upon to do a very disagreeable thing; and as I cannot afford to pay for it, I must hope that you will?” I doubt if that is quite practicable.’

Mrs. Bradshaw looked puzzled. ‘It is a difficulty; yes,—I own it. I suppose Ina is not likely to think of this kind of thing herself.’

‘Not in the least. She has grown up with the idea, diligently instilled into her by her grandmother, that my income is extremely good, and that the sum contributed out of her fortune towards the annual housekeeping is ample; and, naturally enough, she never troubles herself about any claims beyond, except so far as she is generous in making presents.’

‘In the present instance, her eyes ought to be opened.’

‘Who is to open them?’

‘Marietta, possibly.’

‘If I could ever bring myself to say anything to her about it! But I can’t. You are the only person with whom I have ever touched upon it.’

‘Well!’—Mrs. Bradshaw paused—began again—‘well!’—paused a second time, then said, ‘Now I trust you as being the most truth-telling woman of my acquaintance. If I did not, it would be out of the question for me to propound a way of helping you out of your present difficulty. You want to go to Boulogne; so do I. You can’t afford it; neither can I. Join forces, and we may manage it. But, in that case, Ina must join

too; and I must tell her that she must, and settle the whole question, independent of you. The only point to be determined is, can you bear to have me living with you for six months?’

I uttered an exclamation of surprise and pleasure; but Mrs. Bradshaw continued—

‘Remember, I am not young, and I am often lazy, and not always good-tempered; and I am accustomed to have my own way, and give my own orders; and if I see you doing foolish things—petting Agnes into a nun, or letting Ina be selfish, or wearing yourself out for Essie and the boys—I shall speak out; I know I shall. You won’t be independent as you have been.’

‘My dear, kind friend,’ I began——

‘I am dear, I know; but as to being kind, that remains to be proved. If I am leading you into a quicksand, I am not kind; so go home and think about it. Picture to yourself a lodging in Boulogne—a French lodging—uncarpeted floors, windows letting in a whirlwind, wood-fires that will go out, beds without curtains, Ina sighing for Harry Anson, Agnes dreaming she is a Lady Abbess, and I—the crowning evil—moaning with dyspepsia, and all but swearing at French cookery. Just think—can you face it? Don’t say, yes; I won’t accept yes, until to-morrow.’

I wished for no such delay, for I had no doubts. But Mrs. Bradshaw was inflexible; and so we parted.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Boulogne, Rue du Château, Haute Ville: October 8.—Such a long time since I wrote my journal! but really I have not had a minute to spare. Mrs. Bradshaw and I had no difficulty in coming to an agreement. She is more generous and unselfish even than I had imagined, and she took all the disagreeables on herself. I hope that, for her, they are not so bad as they would have been for me. The Boulogne plan was proposed to Ina as a good one for Agnes and Essie, that they might improve themselves in French; and also, I said plainly, as Mrs. Bradshaw had advised me, that it would be very awkward for her to remain at Dernham, meeting Mr. Anson continually, and therefore, on her account alone, the move would be very desirable. She acquiesced, I could scarcely say willingly—for she has been so much depressed lately, that she does not seem to do anything willingly; but there were no objections made. She felt, I am sure, very much fretted at being close to the Manor, with an embargo laid upon any communication with it, and, in reality, was not sorry to go away. Mrs. Bradshaw settled the financial question in a way which would have been impossible for me, as she at once separated Ina from me in her calculations, and took it for granted that she would pay a distinct share. This, too, was arranged without difficulty—for Ina is always most willing to do anything which is put before her as right, the only misfortune being, that she does not think of the right herself. All

this being done, Mrs. Bradshaw wrote to a friend to look out for a house, and sent the Colonel over to inspect those which were proposed to us. The result is that we are settled in Boulogne in the Haute Ville. We might have had a pleasant *château* on the Capécure Road, about two miles out of the town; and if we had been anticipating summer, instead of winter, I think we should have taken it; for it commands a lovely view, and has a good garden, which would be very pretty if only there could be neat turf, instead of untidy grass, for a lawn. But the distance from the town in the winter would have been a great drawback. Ina would have found it dull, and Agnes and Essie would not have had masters as easily; in fact, we should, in all probability, have lived quite to ourselves; which is just what, at this moment, is undesirable for us all. Mrs. Bradshaw from the first expressed her preference for a town. 'I like to see my fellow-creatures in a new garb,' she said to me one day, when we were talking the matter over. 'French human nature is not English human nature, whatever philosophers may say; and I must try and find out for myself where the difference lies.'

I sent Agnes to Chilhurst before we left Dernham. She went up to London under the care of the guard, and Mr. Neville met her there. It was her first experience in travelling alone, and she was nervous about it, and so was I; but economy, which is becoming a great necessity, carried the day: and as she must accustom herself to independence sooner or later, it is as well she should begin early. She has been there ever since, supremely happy, enjoying the novelty and the kindness, and bewitched more and more with Marietta, and learning to understand Mr. Neville, and feel at ease with him. She has been hearing a good deal about Charlie, too, from John Penrhyn, who has been at Chilhurst for a few days; and she tells me that

the tutor spoke most highly to John of Charlie's abilities and general good conduct, saying, that the only thing he needed was application. It seems that John is still harping upon having Charlie with him after a time ; but I shall fight off the question.

We have been here now about three weeks. We could not come before, for I had to prepare the cottage for letting, and there were many things to be packed away. I have not heard of a tenant yet, but I live in hope. It is an unfortunate time of the year, for the season at Westford is nearly over.

It gave me a great pang to give up the cottage, even for a time. I have become so very fond of it ; and the preparations awakened the recollections of our last foreign move—recollections which slumber, but never die. People think that I have got over that grief—and they are right, so far that I can give my mind to present interests, and find pleasure in them, and that I have no longer the constant aching pain at my heart. But I have not in the least got over it, in the sense of forgetfulness.

Such thoughts, however, are only for my private chamber—my hours of prayer, my night-wakings. They are little suited to life as it is in this busy, bright, care-forgetting world of France.

Having a house in the Haute Ville implies that we are quiet, and aristocratic, and poor, that we like narrow streets and few shops, and look down with an amiable absence of envy upon the plebeians of the Basse Ville, who, being rich with the riches of trade, dress smartly, and give balls, and enjoy public promenades. The English inhabitants of the Haute Ville are, in fact, for the most part, a chosen few who have had a special introduction to the acquaintance of a most exclusive little society of the old French *noblesse*—marquises and marchionesses, viscounts and viscountesses, who care less for their title than for the distinctive 'de,'

CHAPTER XXXIX.

October 16.—A marked day, not so much in itself, as because it has carried me back to a past which I thought buried, so as never in any sense, but that of memory, to rise again. This house is at the corner of two streets, and close to the new cathedral, built, or rather in process of building, by the exertions of one man, on the site of an old church destroyed at the Revolution. As a church, it has but little charm to my eyes, for it is Grecian : but it is large and handsome in itself, and, as an evidence of what zeal can do, very interesting. Just at this moment there are great preparations for a grand service which is to celebrate the opening of the building for public use, though it cannot be actually completed for years. The organ is sounding all day long, and the voices of the priests and choristers, practising their chants, come to us with a full sweetness and depth which one rarely hears. Last evening one of our French friends came to tell us that there was some particularly good chanting going on, and we might, if we liked, get admittance to the cathedral, and enjoy it quietly ; for there was no service, only practising for the fête.

We all went forth into the darkness, and made our way across a square court planted with trees, to the college which adjoins the cathedral. At the entrance stood a priest talking to a man who—as I first caught sight of him by the light of a dim oil-lamp—I thought was a common beggar. But as he moved for us to pass, I saw him

no symptoms of change in anyone—or, I should rather say, I hear of none. Mrs. Bradshaw has means of intelligence which we have not, for Marian Bradshaw still keeps up a vigorous correspondence with Charlotte Anson ; and certainly it will not be owing to any want of interest on the part of the latter, if the marriage falls to the ground. She is bent upon it ; so Marian says.

Ina is very considerate for my comfort. The house is large, and only half-furnished, according to our English ideas ; but she has insisted upon hiring several things—small tables and sofas, and one or two easy chairs ; so that we are much more comfortable than we were at first. This thoughtfulness is all the more pleasant to me now, because it shows that she does not misunderstand my reason for taking her away from Dernham. Sometimes I hope that the fact of my having been perfectly straightforward in my actions throughout the whole of this affair, and having in no way concealed either from her or from Mr. Anson what I think about it, has given her confidence and courage. It is that which she needs to keep her right. There are many charming points of character about her, if one could only always feel trust in her. Mrs. Bradshaw, I am sure, likes her better than she did, a good deal, and that is a great comfort to me.

fortable sense of insecurity, confirmed when, just as we entered our house, I saw the figure of a man standing at the corner of the opposite street, and apparently watching us. It might or might not have been the Baron. The light was too indistinct for me to be certain, and if it had been he might have had no purpose in being there. But the fact brought back all those disagreeable Spanish fears which I have lately recurred to only as a matter of amusement. I could not help talking them over with Mrs. Bradshaw before we went to bed, and in her sensible, kindly way she did me a great deal of good, owning that it was unpleasant to have this man again in one's neighbourhood, but pointing out that he was not at all likely to keep up any feeling of revenge against me, since he had really gained what he wanted when Mr. Neville paid him John Penrhyn's debt. I said 'Yes; and you really think so?' and owned myself very foolish; and went to bed and dreamt of the Baron and—I really can't tell exactly what—only it was something which made me wake in a fright. This morning, naturally enough, I scolded myself for my folly, and felt quite bold, but still I determined to write to Mr. Neville. Mrs. Bradshaw made no reference to the Baron whilst Ina and Essie were in the room, but after they had left the breakfast-table, she was just beginning to refer to him, when we were interrupted by hearing a rough voice in the corridor, holding a rather impatient colloquy with our little French maid, which was abruptly ended, and Nanette opened the door, and announced a 'Monsieur who would see Madame, though he had been told that it was not convenient.' Enter the Baron, of course. He was not quite the beggar of the previous night; he had evidently got himself up with something like care; but the shock of his appearance was startling to Mrs. Bradshaw, as she afterwards told me;—so worn, and sodden and disreputable in his every look and gesture,—she did not wonder

at my shrinking from him. Yet he came in humbly, even making apologies for his intrusion, and certainly giving us no cause to think that he harboured any ideas of revenge. 'All he wished for,' he said, was Mr. Penrhyn's address. 'I was Mr. Penrhyn's friend, and no doubt I knew it. Would I tell him where he was? He had written to him lately, but had received no answer, and supposed, therefore, that he must be absent from home.' The question was asked in a familiar tone which jarred upon me more than I can say. There was something in it which implied such a knowledge of John Penrhyn's movements, with a right to be acquainted with them. I saw clearly that, as regarded myself, there was nothing to make me uneasy. This unhappy man had sunk too low to be able to do me an injury, except by some violent means, which, scoundrel as he was, it would be absurd to suppose he would have recourse to for so small a matter. But that he should still have kept up an intercourse of this kind with John Penrhyn was startling and painful.

I hesitated before mentioning that John was at Chilhurst. If it had been possible to refuse giving the address, I would; but I had no excuse: so I gave it, and the Baron wrote it in his pocket-book, wished us good morning, and departed.

'There is nothing to fear from him,' said Mrs. Bradshaw, as we heard him descend the staircase.

'Nothing for me,' I replied, 'but everything for John Penrhyn. What can have induced him to keep up any connection with such a man?'

'Habit, association, pity—who can tell?' replied Mrs. Bradshaw. 'Young people—men especially—tie weights round their necks in early life, which they would give worlds to be free from afterwards. And, after all, this man may be only intending to beg from him.'

'I should think so,' was my answer, 'only he spoke in

such a familiar tone, and as if the correspondence was constant. And then—' I paused.

' Then what ? ' asked Mrs. Bradshaw.

' He is Henry Penrhyn's son, and I have such a dread of inherited tastes.'

' Such a belief in them, you mean. You have never done justice to John Penrhyn.'

' I shall have done him more than justice if he has been keeping up an intercourse with Baron von Bronnen,' I said. ' I never suspected that.'

' I protest against jumping to a hasty conclusion,' persisted Mrs. Bradshaw. ' Because one man writes to another, it does not follow that he has been led by him to the gaming-table, which is what you dread. I believe John Penrhyn to be a thoroughly firm, high-principled man, and I am convinced you would believe him to be the same, if it were not for some—I was going to say unaccountable prejudice, but perhaps it is not unaccountable; anyhow, it is a kind of suspicion which you would never allow to influence you in any other case. And, my dear friend, you must let me say, it is unworthy of you.'

' Is it ? '—and I sighed. ' I wish I could get rid of it.'

' Well, then, compel yourself to do so.'

' Easy to say, but hard to do. And how am I to set about it ? '

' Write to John Penrhyn, and tell him what is in your mind: if he is what I believe him to be, he will like you all the better for it.'

' Tell him I suspect him?—impossible! He will ask why.'

' Let him ask; your answer is plain: you are fidgety, crotchety—you can't bear to doubt him.'

' It will be showing great interest in him,' I said.

' Well! you have a great interest, haven't you ? '

‘Yes, in a way.’

Mrs. Bradshaw became impatient.

‘You may keep your opinion to yourself,’ she said ;
‘but I can never keep mine ; so I will say plainly, to ease my mind, that in the matter of this prejudice against John Penrhyn, I think you are one of the silliest, most provoking women I ever met with. You have no foundation for it, seeing what he has been for some years past, yet you have allowed it to stand in the way of your boy’s comfort and your own advantage ; and now you are going to act very unfairly, by adopting a mere suspicion, and not giving him the opportunity of explanation. No wonder Mr. Neville says he is disappointed in you. I am disappointed too. I could not have supposed you would be unjust to anyone.’

What reply could I make ? To tell the origin of my feeling would but have been throwing back the odium of prejudice on the memory which to me is sacred. I merely said, ‘I don’t think we are wise to discuss the matter.’

Mrs. Bradshaw, however, when once excited on a subject is not very easily checked ; and, regardless of my silence, she went on, and growing more and more eager, she said many severe and unjustifiable things, implying that my feeling was personal, not to John Penrhyn only, but to all the family.

I was irritated beyond expression. If I had no right to be prejudiced against John, I certainly had full cause to dislike Mrs. Penrhyn ; and Mrs. Bradshaw knew it perfectly well, and at another time would have been the first to find fault with her. As she went on, I became so extremely angry, that if I had trusted myself to answer a single word, we should have had a quarrel which might have ended in a complete split. I vented my feelings by seating myself at the writing-table, and beginning a letter

to John Penrhyn. It was very short, for it was written impatiently, and merely as a safety-valve.

‘MY DEAR JOHN,—I have met Baron von Bronner here: he wished to know your address, and I have given it. He implies that you are in constant communication with him. I have no business to interfere in such matters, but I confess the information startles and pains me. Perhaps you will think it worth while to contradict it.

‘Your sincere friend,

‘M. ANSTRUTHER.’

I laid the letter before Mrs. Bradshaw, and said coolly, ‘Will that please you?’

She just glanced at it, and replied, ‘You could not have said less.’

‘And I do not choose to say more,’ I answered. ‘At any rate, you cannot now say that I am unfair to him.’ I folded my letter, directed it, and left the room.

I don’t mean to note down all that has passed through my mind since: confessions are for God, not for a journal. I had felt very angry, and been contemptuous and irritating. Mrs. Bradshaw had said the worst things, but I suspect I had looked them. I was thoroughly humiliated by it all. It would have been difficult to bring myself right again, for in a case of anger even one’s prayers cannot restore one’s self-respect; but as I was trying that best and surest remedy in all cases of mental disturbance, Mrs. Bradshaw knocked at the door.

‘Let me in, my dear: I can’t take no!’ And I let her come in. ‘Now kiss me, if you can; I shall not be surprised if you can’t. I am a wretch, and I have nearly worried you to death. And I retract all I have said; and I hate Mrs. Penrhyn just as much as you do, and more. And if John does not prove himself innocent, I will

never speak a good word for him again. There, dear, you forgive, don't you?'

We kissed each other, and laughed heartily.

'I am an idiot,' said Mrs. Bradshaw.

'Ditto for myself,' was my reply. 'But, seriously, will that note do? I don't feel that I can write anything else.'

'You know best. I should say it would make him angry.'

'Well! I will try and modify it, but it will be difficult. Leave me now, and I will see what I can make of it.'

I re-wrote my note; that is, I put in a few sentences, which made it more humble and friendly; but even then I do not think it quite satisfied Mrs. Bradshaw.

However, it was sent, and I am awaiting the answer.

CHAPTER XL.

October 23.—No letter from John Penrhyn, but one from Agnes, which gives me an undefinable sense of uneasiness. The child is not in good spirits, and, as she confesses, not quite well—that, perhaps, may be the cause of the bad spirits. She says, herself, that she is so sorry that the time is drawing near when she must leave Marietta; but then she tells me, also, that she is longing to be with us all; and, up to this time, she has been delighting in the prospect of being abroad. I cannot understand it. She makes a kind of confession to me. Life seems objectless—she cannot take an interest in things which interest other people. She wishes she had some definite employment. And the world seems so sad and sinful, she longs to escape from it. Yet she does not say what all this is *à propos* to; and I cannot imagine that she has been seeing or hearing anything particularly sad and sinful. The Nevilles have had a good many people staying in their house; and so, I suppose, there have been drives, and rides, and huntings, and dinner-parties: but what Agnes has always remarked before has been that, in the midst of the amusements provided for other people, Marietta and Mr. Neville alway manage to go their own way, and pursue their own duties. She has said to me more than once that living with them has been quite a lesson, and has made her comprehend, better than she ever did before, how religion may be carried into a life which, outwardly, would seem to be one of mere worldly

ease. I remember it was only in the last letter that she said she was sure Marietta practised as much self-denial and self-discipline as a nun, and that she neglects no one. What has suddenly given her this sense of sadness and sinfulness, I can't imagine. It is perfectly true that life is what she describes it, but she is too young to feel or understand it; and there is no self-reproach with the confession; I could enter into it better if there were. She is so extremely sensitive in matters of conscience, that if she had any scruple in her mind I could well believe she would work herself into a state of misery; but I hear of nothing of the kind—only of a general depression—a longing to be with me, and yet a dread of leaving Chilhurst. I must bring her here as soon as possible; whether the disease be mental or physical, the sooner she is under home treatment the better. I kept the letter to myself, for Mrs. Bradshaw would not quite sympathise with such vague grief, and Ina is too absorbed in her own troubles to think much of those which she would consider imaginary. Henry Anson, we hear, through Marian Bradshaw, has not been well—he is living alone at the Manor. Lady Anson and the rest of the family are at Norwood. Dear old Captain Shaw is very kind in his visits, but Henry does not go out; and, in fact, for the last fortnight he has not been able to do so; he has had such a very severe cold. I told Ina all this, for I wished her to feel that no one wanted to keep anything back from her, and then I elicited a little confidence on her part, and she said, 'Marian Bradshaw has sent me several little notes since we have been here, telling me when she had seen Harry, and how he was looking, and I knew he was laid up with a cold.'

It was a relief to my mind to know that the communications went no further. Ina, indeed, did not say that this was all, but I do not doubt her as I used to do. And she

need not have told me anything, unless she had chosen to do so. But even if I were doubtful, I could not and would not show it; for suspicion is, I fully believe, in almost all cases, simply ruinous.

Hugh writes me word that he has been talking to Mr. Pierce about his future profession, and that he has made up his mind that he should like to be a barrister, only Mr. Pierce tells him that it is such a very uphill profession, and that it will necessitate his being dependent on me so long. Mr. Pierce adds a few lines, to the effect that Hugh has brilliant abilities, and, if he will only work, he may have a fellowship at Cambridge, and so be able to get on independently. But the 'if' is a large one. Still I shall not throw cold water on the idea. I have long been anxious to mark out something definite for Hugh; for I remember it was an axiom of my husband's, that if a boy has a profession set before him early, it steadies his mind, and gives him an object in his work. He may or may not follow the course proposed—that will depend on the development of taste and circumstances—but the definite aim is in itself a good. So Hugh shall work for a fellowship, and dream of being a judge. If he should succeed, he will be satisfied; if he should fail, he will still have had the mental training and moral discipline which will fit him for some other position.

October 26.—Mr. Neville is to bring Agnes here on Tuesday next; most kind it is in him, for I was fidgeting about the journey. He accounts for my not having heard from John Penrhyn by telling me that he is gone into Wales to see some distant cousin upon business. And yet I wonder that his letters have not been sent after him, so that he should answer them. The silence wakens misgivings; and even Mrs. Bradshaw owns it is strange. I have seen the Baron again in the distance, looking a little more reputable in outward appearance; and he will bow

to me, which, really, is too great an impertinence. The cottage has been let since the 20th for two months, possibly longer. It is the only offer that has been made. We have taken this house till January, not liking to pledge ourselves longer. Mrs. Penrhyn puts me in a difficulty by writing a cold note requesting to know, exactly, the truth as to Ina's engagement. She implies that I have, *as usual*, deceived her. I shall tell her precisely how the case stands, and leave her to think and say what she likes. She will never let me rest till Ina is married. Even in this last letter there are references to poor Lord Hopeton's misery ; whereas, Agnes, not knowing how interesting the information would be, mentions that she has met Lord Hopeton at his aunt's, and adds, ' he is going to be married to a Miss Berkley ; but I should not like to be in her place—he has such a horrid face ; and people say he is very wild.'

November 1.—All Saints' Day.—It always carries me back to Pau, and the lack of English services, and the comfort of being able to go into a church and say my prayers by myself, when I was so anxious about my precious Cecil. One wonders why certain things and certain events should rest in the memory when others, as it were, equally important, fade away. There must be something, no doubt, in the laws of association ; but one would fain think, also, that there is something in the fact that they have left a mark upon one's character, that they have helped in some way to mould it. Some events, outwardly important, act only upon the surface of the mind ; others, very slight, touch some hidden affection, and by that means leave an indelible stamp. It is so with many little incidents of that time at Pau—I feel they have actually affected my inner being ; they have tended, directly, to make me what I am ; and yet there was nothing unusual in them—

nothing which must not have occurred to hundreds who have been placed in similar circumstances, only I supposed they touched me in some peculiar way.

But this All Saints' Day has had a present interest, as well as a past; for my dear Agnes is returned to me. She and Mr. Neville crossed from Folkestone, at twelve, and were here by two; a very good passage—remarkably calm for the season. On land, indeed, there has hardly been a breath to stir the air, as Essie made me remark when she repeated to me the All Saints' Hymn in the 'Christian Year,' 'Why blowest thou not, thou wintry wind?' I went down to the harbour to meet them. A bustling, noisy scene it was, not fitted for such a welcome as my child required. She looked so gentle, and quiet, and timid, in the midst of the rough, gesticulating drivers of *fiacres*, and the stalwart women, the widows of drowned fishermen, whose privilege it is to act as porters, and carry the luggage from the port. But though Agnes was pale, she did not strike me as being thin, or appearing really ill; and I was able to congratulate Mr. Neville, in all heartiness, on having brought her back to me better than I expected. He is looking remarkably well himself—years improve him; contact with the world unstiffens his joints; and he is more agreeable as a man who is obliged to enter into society and country pursuits, than I suspect he would ever have been as a dogmatical barrister. We walked up to the Haute Ville. Agnes was so amused with this first experience of a French town, that she allowed Mr. Neville to carry on the conversation with me, and was wholly engrossed herself with the tall houses, and French names, and advertisements, and the dress of the people—which, however, is not in any degree as distinctive as it used to be. Essie was overpowering in her welcome when we reached home. Ina was very pleasant and loving, but a little under restraint—for Mr. Neville was decidedly cold to

her ; but we had a very pleasant luncheon (not dinner, for Mrs. Bradshaw and I agreed we would not victimise Mr. Neville to our ladies' habits), and heard everything that was to be told about Marietta and Cissy ; and a good deal about other people whose names were familiar, though their persons were not ; and Agnes really talked a good deal, and had her little private *badinage* with Mr. Neville, which showed a great advance in freedom ; and, altogether, I was well pleased, till just at the end, when a certain Mr. Digby was mentioned. The name struck me as recalling the Mr. Digby who had first introduced Mr. Neville to the Ansons, and who, I find, was a cousin of this new friend. When he was mentioned, I noticed—I really can scarcely tell why, for my attention had been given to Mr. Neville just before—that a look of pain came over Agnes' face, and she became silent. It was just at the close of luncheon ; and as Mrs. Bradshaw said she had letters to write, and Agnes was tired and wanted rest, I proposed to take Mr. Neville out myself, and to lionise him over the town—which really meant, to walk on the ramparts. I felt a little restrained when alone with him. The remembrance of our difference about John Penrhyn was present to me, and I disliked the idea of renewing it in his mind, by mentioning my suspicions about the Baron. I was therefore relieved when, as we stood on the walls, looking down over the river and the harbour, he began upon a different subject.

‘I have been very glad of this excuse for coming,’ he said, ‘though I did not quite like to leave Marietta. I wanted to have a little talk with you about this unfortunate affair of Ina's. You know, Lord Hopeton has been in our neighbourhood.’

‘Yes,’ I said ; ‘Agnes mentioned it.’

‘But she could not have told you—for she could scarcely have heard, that Lord Hopeton is far from measured in

the language he uses about Ina; and, really, if what he says is true, he is justified in it.'

'If!' I said: 'but let me hear what he says. I believe I know everything.'

'He declares that there was a tacit engagement between himself and Ina. He told his aunt, who told Marietta, that it was a thing perfectly understood. He spoke to Mrs. Penrhyn first; she gave him every encouragement. He was allowed to offer a present to Ina, on the full understanding that, if she accepted it, she would be willing to receive his attentions. She did accept it; she did more—a great deal more: if there was no regular offer made, it was because they both so thoroughly understood each other; and he was then thrown over without the slightest preparation, the slightest reason given. Worthless as he is in some ways, he has still a sense of honour left, and, naturally enough, he is indignant. And now the report is abroad that this is not the first time that Ina has behaved in this way; and falsehoods are circulated, which are reaching Lady Anson's ears; whilst, on the other hand, Lady Anson's refusing her consent to Henry's marriage confirms them. So there is action and reaction, and Ina's character as a jilt is established. I call this sad.'

'So do I,' I said, bitterly—'most sad. And the person to blame is Mrs. Penrhyn. In that affair of the brooch, she deceived Ina grossly.'

'I believe it,' was Mr. Neville's reply; 'but the world won't.'

'Then it must be left to its opinion,' I said. 'I see no remedy.'

'Yes,' replied Mr. Neville, 'there is a remedy—at least there is something which may be accepted as such. Let Ina marry Harry Anson, with Lady Anson's approbation, and all this past folly will be smothered.'

‘Certainly ; let her, if she can,’ I said.

‘And you would not interfere?’

‘I! no: why should I? how should I?’

‘I know you hold certain doctrines about compatibility, and suitableness, and mutual elevation of the character in matrimony—do they stand in the way?’

‘I hold no doctrines whatever,’ I replied, ‘except that people should be straightforward; and that it is better to marry a man who fears God, than one who neglects Him.’

‘Harry Anson does not do that. But looking at these extremely injurious reports, are you willing that another effort should be made to soften Lady Anson?’

‘No; not at all willing. I feel they will be useless; and, I confess, my pride goes against them.’

‘Feeling and pride are nothing,’ exclaimed Mr. Neville. ‘I want reason.’

‘And I have none to give. But what do you mean by another effort?’

‘An effort made by some fresh person—Captain Shaw, for instance.’

‘Henry Anson has been putting you up to this,’ I said.

Mr. Neville paused. ‘Well, yes, he has—so far that his wishes coincide with the conclusion which Marietta and I had arrived at before. This year’s separation is extremely awkward.’

I don’t know that I quite approved of such direct interference with my family affairs; but Mr. Neville, though he speaks rather dogmatically, never intends to be interfering, so I answered calmly—

‘You cannot think it more awkward than I do: witness my having brought Ina away from Dernham. If you, or Captain Shaw, or anyone, can bring about a better state of things, without implicating me, well and good; but I

shall be annoyed beyond expression if Lady Anson should be led to suppose that I have anything to do with the effort. It would be undignified and lowering both to Ina and myself. Whatever is done must be undertaken upon Mr. Anson's responsibility, and carried out without reference to us.'

'So far settled, then,' said Mr. Neville; 'you shall be troubled no more. You say you are to stay here till January?'

'We have taken the house till then, with the option of keeping it on longer, if we wish.'

'And you like the place?'

'Yes: like many other things in this world, it has been greatly maligned. This old part of the town is as quaint and French as one could desire, and there is a sense of freedom about it—a consciousness that, if one liked, one could start off at a moment's notice, without having to depend on wind and tide, and travel over all Europe. The ditch, as Napoleon called it, is a great restraint upon a wandering imagination when one is in England.'

'All very well in time of peace,' said Mr. Neville; 'but wait till war comes, and you will soon be thankful for the ditch. Still, I agree with you—'

Every island is a prison, strongly guarded by the sea.

I suppose, though, that we can learn to accommodate ourselves to it—as we do, in fact, to existence on earth, which is nothing more than life in prison, simply by not accustoming ourselves to wish for anything beyond.'

'More easily said than done,' was my answer.

'Even so: and one can't fly, but one can cross the Channel; so the two cases are not quite parallel. Nevertheless, I think I could preach a sermon about it. By-the-by, has Agnes told you how fascinated she

has been by the sermons of a neighbour of ours, Mr. Digby?’

‘She mentioned the sermons, but I had a fancy—I hope it was only a fancy—that she did not choose to say much about the preacher.’

Mr. Neville laughed, as he said, ‘You wish to get rid of Ina before you trouble yourself about Agnes; but you need not be in the least afraid. Digby is a capital fellow, but not at all likely to fascinate a fastidious young lady like Agnes, who seems prepared to pass through life “in maiden meditation, fancy free.”’

‘I trust she may, sincerely,’ I said. ‘You don’t believe me. Every mother is supposed to desire, if not to further, her daughter’s marriage, or to be insensible to a mother’s duty. But if Agnes should ever fall in love it will be a matter of life and death, and I tremble at the risk.’

Mr. Neville made no reply, and yet there was something in his manner which led me to think there was something he would fain have said. We stood together, looking down over the old grey walls, upon the busy town, the harbour and shipping, the low sandy river spreading itself out beneath our feet and winding away towards Capécure, and the little woody hamlets beyond, grey in the autumnal mists; and after a long, long silence, Mr. Neville said, ‘Those who have put into the lottery and drawn a prize, can best tell what it would have been to have drawn a blank. I have to thank you for Marietta—don’t imagine I ever forget it;’ and his voice trembled as he laid his hand in mine, and turned away his head. We walked up the avenue leading towards the Route de Calais, and then we talked of other things. I felt I must name John Penrhyn, though I greatly disliked it. I inquired what he was doing, and received for answer that he was making up his mind to go to India sooner than he had intended. An old friend, the cousin of the Mr. Digby

whom we had just mentioned, was urging him to lose no time in settling himself in Bombay. Matters connected with this intention had taken him out of London. I alluded to the letter I had written, to which I had received no answer, and then, summoning courage, spoke of my misgivings about the Baron. Mr. Neville laughed—just that kind of laugh which so often denotes a secret doubt. ‘It was an absurd idea,’ he said. ‘John had so entirely changed since those idle days in Spain.’ But he recurred to the subject several times, and asked all kinds of questions, which he scarcely would have done if he had thought my uneasiness unfounded.

CHAPTER XLI.

November 8.—Such a quiet routine we have fallen into ! Mr. Neville only stayed one day, and then Agnes began work, and with her methodical ways has quite reformed Essie—indeed, reformed us all. Mrs. Bradshaw declares that, for her part, she was never under such severe discipline before, and that when Agnes is present, duty, like Banquo's ghost, always occupies the easy-chair. She hears continually that music must be practised, or exercises must be written, or M. Saint Laurent is coming, or Signor Villari is expected ; and being incorrigibly given to idleness, her wicked impulse is to throw the grammars and dictionaries out of window, make polite bows to the masters, and start off for Amiens or Paris. It must be rather a wearisome time for her, having no particular personal interest in the lessons, though she bears it charmingly, and is the life of the party. And I would fain make Agnes a little less scrupulous about these lessons. But there is something in her which I feel I don't reach, and which seems to be urging her on whenever she is tempted to stop in her studies. She used to be indolent, given to reverie, but now it is work, always work, which yet I don't fancy she thoroughly enjoys. I have referred several times to the last letter she wrote me from Chilhurst, but I can get nothing from her, except that she was not feeling very well, and said out just what happened to be in her mind.

Still no letter from John Penrhyn ! and, as the Baron

has not been near us, or made any fresh enquiries for John's address, it is natural to suppose that he has been more fortunate in his correspondence than I have been. I confess I don't like it. The weather has become cold, and Boulogne is losing its brightness. The sea looks grey; the walks on the ramparts are strewn with fallen leaves; the wind blows keen upon the heights, and our house is wanting in furniture, and the passages are cold and dreary. I begin to wish for home again; so, I think, do we all. If I chose, I might let the cottage for a year, but I cannot make up my mind to that. Were it possible for anyone to bring Lady Anson round to a more amicable state of mind, there would be no objection to our returning in January; but I hear nothing of any efforts made by Captain Shaw, or any other person. I have come to the conclusion that the one great lesson which the events of life are intended to teach me, if not others, is patience. We are invited to a *soirée* to-morrow evening—a very small affair—at the house of some French friends of Mrs. Bradshaw's—extremely pleasant people. Agnes wants to be excused; she is shy of speaking French; but she must go, if it were only to accustom her to it: and talking French with French people is very different from talking it with English people. One is quite safe from criticism or ridicule, whatever one's blunders may be.

November 10.—Light at last; though it has come in a strange way. We were at Madame de Brézé's last night—Ina, and Agnes, and myself. Mrs. Bradshaw had—what was most unusual for her—a headache, and undertook to stay at home and keep Essie company. It was a primitive proceeding;—the dress, nothing more than our usual evening *toilette*; and we put on cloaks and hoods, and were escorted by Jacques, our landlady's husband, a very short distance, through the dark streets; and went at eight, and were at home again before twelve. Madame

de Brézé is young and pretty, and her husband is a French courtier of the old stamp, abounding in politeness and pretty speeches. Cards and dancing were the amusements, both on a small scale. The young people seemed to join in the former with more zest than in the latter. The guests were, for the most part, French. The young ladies were beautifully dressed, very well behaved, and had little to say, except when they were excited by the chances of the game. Two or three English girls were present; and shy, as they are usually supposed to be, they were quite talkative and at ease, compared with the French girls. I did not take part in the games, neither did Ina or Agnes. Cards are all very well when they are played as a matter of skill, like chess or backgammon; and to wile away a weary hour by a rubber of whist with an invalid or a person tired with a day's work, is often an act of real charity: but these games of chance, in which there is not the slightest pretence of skill, and in which the only interest is the question of gain, are not only unutterably tiresome to me, but really objectionable. It was true that last night very trifling stakes were played for; but an English lady who, like me, stood watching the game, said to me afterwards, that she had known large sums lost and won even in that small way.

It amused me to see the separation of the ladies and gentlemen—it was more marked than even in England. The young men seated themselves at one table for *écarté*, whilst the young ladies and their chaperones were at the other. Then, when dancing began, the gentlemen rose in a solemn way, took their partners into the next room, danced a quadrille in set form, led the young ladies back to their friends, and resumed their own card-playing till another quadrille was called for. There was no walking about together, no opportunity for conversation. Everything of this kind was carried on with the married women, and they alone danced the valse or polka. Little cups of

chocolate and dishes of bonbons were handed round for refreshment, and supper was provided for persons specially invited to it; but we were not amongst the number. This was our evening—amusing and agreeable, as a specimen of foreign society, but only important to me, because, to my great surprise, about ten o'clock, an English gentleman was announced whose name I did not catch, and when he entered I beheld John Penrhyn. I was with Ina in the inner *salon*; Agnes was dancing. Madame de Brézé received John as a stranger, but he was introduced to her as a friend by a young Frenchman, who accompanied him. He did not see me for some moments; when he did, his start of surprise was as if he had received an electric shock. He rushed up to me, and, disturbing all French proprieties, shook hands with Ina in the most eager way; and, in fact, was so demonstrative that I saw several eyes directed towards him with something like disapprobation. But John Penrhyn is the last person to be alive to public opinion. He goes straight forward on his own course, not very much criticising others, and seldom contemplating the possibility that others may criticise him. Ina, whose temperament is just the reverse, and who was aware that it is not quite according to French etiquette for young girls to receive anything approaching to marked attention from a gentleman, unless she is actually a *fiancée*, drew back more openly, I think, than was exactly needed; and then John seemed a little chilled, and addressed himself again to me. But he could not conceal his delight at meeting us. 'It was totally unexpected,' he said; 'he had come to Boulogne on business, and of course meant to see us, but he had been detained till quite late, expecting to meet a person who never appeared, and at last his friend, M. de Villecour, who was in the same hotel, offered to bring him here, and as he had nothing else to do, he accepted the offer.'

The explanation was very simple; yet what was the

business? and who was the person that he had come to see? The questions suggested themselves to my mind; but when John Penrhyn is present—I do not know how it is—I never can retain the suspicions which haunt me at other times. I believe one of the reasons why I feel so called upon to be on my guard in things in which he is concerned, is that his look, and manner, and tone are so very pleasant to me that I feel as if he would win me over to trust in him even against reason. I like him twenty times better than I do Mr. Neville. I feel in talking to him as if I could say out just what comes into my mind, without the slightest fear of being misunderstood. He has no crotchets or fancies; he can thoroughly sympathise, he is always helpful; and so very open-hearted and loving, that he rouses all the mother's tenderness in me, and I feel with him as I do with my own boys—a longing to shield him, if possible, from pain or suffering; and I believe he knows this, though I have never shown him half the kindness I should have done if he had been anyone else. He has come to me occasionally in little personal difficulties—just as a young man would to his mother—with the same kind of trustfulness. And his manner with Ina and Agnes has always been so charming. I have never had to keep a check or suggest a caution with them, because, in spite of his demonstrative nature, I have always felt that he was so refined and gentlemanly. To-night when he spoke to Ina there would have been nothing to notice if it had been an English home party; it was only the French etiquette, which is so strict before marriage, and so lax afterwards, that made me feel at all uncomfortable. I gave him a hint that he must be quiet, and he took it instantly; and when he and Agnes met, there was nothing which the most criticising eye would have noticed. In fact, he talked entirely to me, till his friend insisted upon it that he must dance, and then he said he went unwillingly; it was such

a delight to him to see home faces and hear home words. Whilst we were together we had a good deal of interesting conversation. My first question was, naturally enough, had he received my note? No; he had been out of London, as Mr. Neville had told me; and though he had given orders that his letters should be forwarded, his stupid old landlady was always making blunders, and no doubt the note had gone astray. 'But what were its contents?' To this I could only reply that I would talk to him about the note to-morrow; and though he looked troubled, and entreated me to tell him about it at once, I was firm; and we then wandered off to other topics. The brother of Mr. Digby is, it seems, in India, and gives most tempting accounts of his prospects as a barrister, and John, impatient by nature, can no longer bear the idea of plodding on in London, or rather not plodding on at all, as he himself said, but standing still, briefless. He has made up his mind to go to India in the spring; and now he is winding up his little affairs, and bringing matters of business to a conclusion in preparation. I was longing to know what little affairs he could have to wind up, but I was prudent, and kept my queries for our explanatory conversation. He walked home with us, and promised to call early the next morning. I am not quite sure whether Henry Anson would have been satisfied with Ina's openly expressed pleasure in the meeting. For myself, when I found how she could appreciate the one, I marvelled that she could ever have found anything to care for in the other. If her engagement had been with John—but no, that would have been infinitely worse—for I could never have consented to it. I thank God that He has spared me the trial.

CHAPTER XLII.

November 12.—I am a coward: I shrink from the pain of facing a fact by putting it before me in words; but it must be done. John Penrhyn has proposed to Agnes. She loves him, as only one so deep-hearted, pure, and concentrated can love; her life is bound up in his; and my sanction is a question of life or death.

Why did I not see it? Why did I not, at least, foresee and guard against it? It has been a strange fatality. I feared for Ina. I went to rest only last night troubling myself lest, perhaps, John's coming here might awaken some new feeling: but I never thought of Agnes. Since our first acquaintance with John Penrhyn, it has never once crossed my mind that for her there could be the least cause for anxiety. She seemed still a child—still, in a certain sense, under discipline. Yet Mrs. Bradshaw has seen symptoms of John's feeling for some time, and tells me she is sure Mr. Neville has suspected it also. Marian Bradshaw once spoke to Marietta about it; and though the latter at the time laughed at the idea, it shows there was something for people to notice. I only have been blind. And now it has come—the one thing which for years has been my dread; and my darling—of all my children the most pure, tender, timid, and unfit to encounter sorrow—is to suffer, because I did not see—because I never thought of watching.

I blame myself, oh! so much, so much! If I had spoken openly, if I had only told Marietta what was

weighing on my mind, she might have interfered to prevent this catastrophe. I go back and back, over all the little incidents of the weeks when John was at Woodleigh, and read plainly the meaning of words and looks, which at the time were a cipher, at least to me. There is no one to find fault with. They have all been simple and real, acting without design; and unexpected and unfortunate as John's declaration has been, it was made upon an impulse which he would have been more than human if he could have resisted.

This was how it came about.

The day after Madame de Brézé's party, I had, for some hours, one of my very bad headaches, and though John called, I could not see him. He came, however, the first thing the following morning. Ina and Agnes were in the room. He spoke to them in his usual friendly, hearty way: I neither remarked nor suspected anything beyond. After a little while, they went away. Ina was to go out with Mrs. Bradshaw, Agnes was to have a music-lesson, so I was left alone with John; and then I began upon the subject which was troubling me, and told him the contents of my note. For an instant he was confused, and I saw he wished to avoid an explanation. The Baron, he said, had from time to time kept up communications with him, but they were of a private nature, and he did not feel himself at liberty to explain them.

I could not urge an explanation, but I must have shown that I was dissatisfied; for, as I hurried to another subject, John broke into the midst of it by saying—

‘There is something in your mind, dear Mrs. Anstruther; I know there is, by the expression of your mouth.’

‘Mouths are most tell-tale features,’ I said; ‘worse even than eyes. I have something in my mind, but as you have just said that you can give me no explanation, I don't see that it is worth while to talk about it.’

‘But it is worth while. I must know;’ he exclaimed, impetuously. ‘I would rather all the world thought ill of me than you. Is it about this wretched man Von Bronnen?’

‘I wish you had nothing to do with him,’ I said.

‘But I have nothing, it is only—the fellow is a scoundrel; I could curse the day I first met him.’

‘So could I, too,’ I replied; ‘for it has caused me many hours of uneasiness.’

‘Has it? Do you really take such an interest in me? Is it of importance to you whether or not I go to the dogs?’

He was so very eager, that he startled me. My mis-giving became almost conviction. ‘Oh, John!’ I said, ‘is it possible for your friends not to take an interest in you—a most painful interest—when they see you connecting yourself with a man whom even you yourself own to be a scoundrel?’

‘I don’t understand,’ he exclaimed. ‘How have I mixed myself up with Baron von Bronnen? who says it?’

‘You say it yourself,’ I replied. ‘You own that you have kept up communications with him.’

He became first pale, then red; and, without immediately answering, he took two or three turns up and down the room, and then coming up to me, said, in a tone of suppressed excitement, ‘And do you really mean, Mrs. Anstruther, that you believe my communications with this rogue are such as I should be ashamed to own?’

‘They were so once,’ I answered; ‘and——’

He interrupted me. ‘Never, never! I deny it before God. I was young, ignorant, a fool; but I never on any one single occasion, so far as Baron von Bronnen is concerned, did or said that which all the world might not have known, though all the world might have blamed me.’

‘I know you were not dishonourable,’ I began.

‘Dishonourable! You will drive me mad. How could the word have passed your lips? Have you lost all respect for me?’

‘I am only anxious about you, my dear John,—anxious as you would be if it was the case of another person.’

‘But anxiety implies mistrust. What have I done, that you should mistrust me?’

‘Nothing that I am aware of; but——’ I felt ashamed of my suspicion, and paused.

‘But you cannot help suspecting, when you are not certain of the contrary. Mrs. Anstruther, you do me the grossest injustice.’

‘I am only too willing to think so,’ I replied; ‘nothing would give me greater satisfaction than to be assured that I was wrong.’

He drew himself up proudly as he said, ‘The assurance of my word is all that any human being has a right to ask. Since that is needed, I give it.’

My impulse was to say instantly, ‘I accept it;’ and then the old prejudice returned, and I paused.

John looked at me quite calmly, quite steadily; but his face was ashy, and there was a look in his eyes so keen, that I trembled as he said, coldly, ‘I understand; I am a Penrhyn. I was told of this, but I did not believe it.’

‘Oh, John, John!’ I exclaimed, ‘do not misjudge me. It is pain—suffering; you do not know how great.’

‘But still I am a Penrhyn,’ he repeated.

‘Still,’ I continued, evading the answer, ‘you failed once—years ago, indeed—but you failed; therefore I have cause to fear lest you may have failed again.’

‘But not when I give you my word to the contrary,’ he said. ‘Mrs. Anstruther’—and his tone became gentle

and touching as a child's—'may God never judge you as you judge me!'

He leant his head upon the mantelpiece, and I went up to him, and taking his hand, I said, 'Listen to me, John; I do accept your word: I do believe that in the case of this wretched man your communications, whatever they may have been, are blameless. It was a wrong and unfounded suspicion, and I grieve for it. Forgive me, and let it pass and be forgotten.'

'It can't pass,' he said, moodily; 'you don't know what you have done.'

'Recalled old days which ought to have been forgotten, and treated you as a boy liable to be led away by a boy's temptations; when, in fact, you are a firm-minded man.'

'I see through it,' he still continued; 'you refused to let me be with Charlie; you thought I should lead him astray.'

'Never mind what I thought,' I began.

'But I do mind; I must know; I must have a full explanation.'

'Wait till you are in India,' I said; 'you are not in a state for explanations now.'

He started from his seat. 'India! Do you think that I can go to India with this doubt in my mind; with my dearest hope, my lifelong happiness, dependent on prejudice? Mrs. Anstruther, does Agnes hate me because I am a Penrhyn?'

A slight noise disturbed us. We looked round, and Agnes was standing at the door; her fingers rested on the handle. There was no need to ask if she had heard the question; her face sufficiently betrayed it.

John rushed up to her; and, as she was about to draw back, he laid his hand on hers, and their eyes met. 'Does Agnes hate me because I am a Penrhyn?' he said again.

My darling glanced at me for a second, as if she would fain have thrown herself into my arms for protection, and then, as John held her hand firmly, she said, in a low voice, 'Mamma, I could not help it;' and her head sank upon his shoulder, and she burst into tears.

It was all so rapid, so momentary, I scarcely remember what I said or did. I believe I went up to them, and attempting to draw Agnes aside, entreated John to leave us together.

But he refused. 'She was his,' he said, 'by her own confession. He would hear it once more. Speak, Agnes, darling!' he exclaimed, as he put his arm fondly around her. 'You will not have me go from you?'

My poor child could not speak, she was too much agitated; but she kept her hand fast clasped in John's, and looked at him with misty, tearful eyes, yet with a smile, beautiful in its trustful love.

He turned to me. 'You see, I am answered. Penrhyn though I am, may I not speak with her alone?'

'When you have first spoken with me,' I replied. 'Agnes, dear child, I must say a few words to John; you must go to your room.'

I kissed her tenderly, but I had troubled her. She glanced from me to John; her voice was scarcely audible, as she said, 'Is it wrong? Oh, mamma! could I help it?'

'There is no wrong in you, my precious one,' I said; 'not a shadow of wrong—only——'

She hesitated still. I think a misgiving about John crossed her mind, for she gazed at him for an instant with a frightened, wondering look, and then she left us.

As the door was closed, I sank down in an arm-chair, and in the pause that followed, prayed God to help me; for never had I more needed help. When I looked up again John was standing beside me, his face colourless,

and a dark tinge round his eyes, which seemed to set them as in a frame, and made the eagerness of their expression startling. He waited for me to speak.

‘Oh! John,’ I said, ‘could you not have spared me this?’

‘I demand an explanation,’ he answered, coldly. ‘I am bewildered.’

‘You should have spoken to me first,’ I said.

‘You are right; I should have done so: forgive my weakness.’ He paused, and then his impetuosity mastered him, and he exclaimed, ‘For God’s sake, let me know the worst! You will not consent?’

‘I cannot.’

‘And why?’

The words were uttered in a tone so altered that I could not have recognised it as his, and as he clenched the arm of my chair, I put out my hand to him, for I thought he would have fainted.

He pushed it aside, and sat down by me; and again he said, ‘And why?’

‘Because I am pledged. It was my husband’s last request that such a thing might never be.’

There was a momentary silence; then slowly, and almost inarticulately, came out the words, ‘Yes, I am a Penrhyn! But God is just. He will not suffer it.’

‘It is no question of mere prejudice,’ I continued, rousing myself to tell my tale without having it drawn from me by questions. ‘Your father’s early life was——’

‘Sad, wretched!’ he exclaimed; ‘you need not recall it.’

‘I do not wish to do so,’ was my reply, ‘except to make you feel that my husband was justified in dreading any further connection between the families; more especially with his strong—perhaps his exaggerated—views on the subject of hereditary tendencies.’

John started from his seat. ‘And I am to be sacri-

ficed to exaggerated views of hereditary tendencies ! Mrs. Anstruther, you will drive me to desperation ! But Agnes shall speak for herself. I will appeal to her on the spot.'

'No, John,' I said, 'you will not. You love her too well. Knowing her to be what she is, you will never disturb her mind by putting the truth before her abruptly. You must let me prepare her mind for it.'

'But in what way ? I will trust no one but myself. God forgive me, but I believe you are all in a league against me.'

'Who?—all ? There is no one but myself—not another human being knows the fact.'

'Then the whole world will be against you ; and she is mine !' he exclaimed, triumphantly. 'The dead to bind the living ! It is folly—wickedness. Mrs. Anstruther, in your secret heart you know that it is so.'

'The promise was asked, and given, in the sight of Death,' I said : 'there was no sin in it.'

'Yes !' he exclaimed, 'it was sin to attempt to be Providence,—to desire to rule when God had ended his rule—to come back from the grave to mar the happiness of those who had done him no wrong. It was cruel—presumptuous. Oh ! forgive me, forgive me ! but you cannot have agreed.'

'He died, believing that I had agreed,' I said. 'He spoke to me in the fullest confidence that I shared his feelings ; and I did share them.'

'But you did not promise ?'

'Yes, I promised. I had not time for thought, it was so near the end. He told me—they were his last words before he became unconscious—that his trust in me upon this point was his greatest earthly comfort ; and so anxious was he, that in his will he had inserted, unknown to me, a clause, disinheriting any one of my children who should marry without my consent.'

John uttered an impatient exclamation ; but I continued,—‘ All this may seem little to you, but it is much to me, and it will certainly be much to Agnes.’

‘ I will see her,’ he said, gloomily ; ‘ I will take my fate from no one but herself.’

‘ To-morrow,’ I replied, ‘ perhaps you may. To-day I must have her to myself. Trust me,’ I added, as I saw he was about to interrupt me ; ‘ I pledge myself to put the case before her without comment or advice of any kind. You shall hear her simple unbiassed answer ; but I cannot allow her to be taken unprepared, and drawn into acknowledgments which she may afterwards repent of.’

I held out my hand to him ; he hesitated. ‘ John,’ I said, ‘ I am more miserable than you are.’

And then he grasped my hand and held it, looking at me with a face of such hopeless entreaty, that I felt all my strength of resolve giving way, and forcing myself away from him, I went to seek Agnes.

It had been a terrible interview, but one far worse awaited me. I found my darling in her own room. She was not, like John, impetuous and angry, but rather, what she always is, quietest in her deepest suffering. I did not leave her time to ask questions ; I made her sit down at my feet, and listen whilst I told her all that I had told John—not more, not less—except that I dwelt more fully upon the causes which had led to my husband’s dread of a connection with Henry Penrhyn’s family—causes which John knew but too well. When, at the close of my history, I said to her, ‘ At that time it was fully believed that Henry Penrhyn was ruining himself by gambling and drinking. and that his children were brought up in similar habits,’ Agnes raised her head, which she had kept bent down, whilst fixing her eyes on the ground, and said, almost proudly, ‘ But, mamma, it was not true.’

‘ It was true then,’ I said ; ‘ and no one could have

anticipated his being what he is now. It has been a wonderful restoration and conversion.'

'And if papa had lived he would not have objected to John?'

For the first time I felt that possibly there might have been prejudice as well as reasonable caution in my husband's dread of the connection. I could not honestly say that he would not have objected to John. I knew that he had so great a dread and dislike of any association with Henry Penrhyn, that, under no circumstances, would he have looked upon the marriage favourably. I merely answered, 'I cannot say, my child. Your father had peculiar ideas upon the subject of hereditary tendencies, and he might have seen things in John—'

Agnes interrupted me, 'But there are none, mamma—there are none.'

'None that you see, or, perhaps, that are ever likely to develop themselves. But, Agnes, we must not think of what might or might not have been, but of what is. The question of right is independent of possibilities.' My poor child sat upright, gazing with tearless eyes upon the misty vapour which dimmed the windows. 'I will leave you to think of it, my precious one,' I said.

She caught hold of my dress. 'Oh, mamma!—no—don't go. Tell me what you think yourself.'

'Darling, I cannot say. God will help me to decide. I must have time to consider. You will have pity upon me, Agnes. I am very miserable.'

And then I gave way and burst into tears. My child forgot herself completely: she had never before seen me so unnerved; and throwing her arms round my neck, she exclaimed, 'Oh! mamma, I am selfish. I did not think of you. It must be terrible. Oh no; you cannot break your word. But John!—John!—'

The tone was agony. I held her in my arms, and

kissed her passionately; and as our tears mingled, she was for a moment soothed, and then came again that low cry of the stricken heart, 'Oh! John, John! Let me see him! Mamma, let me see him once more! Pray for me. I will try to bear it;' until at length I laid her on the sofa, and sending for Drayton, bade her watch that no one should go into the room, and then left it, hoping that my darling might find rest from her misery in sleep. The rest of the day was—I cannot say what. By mutual consent we were silent.

CHAPTER XLIII.

November 14.—These days are nightmareish. I scarcely know how they pass. My darling is ill. She keeps her room, and can see no one. I dare not mention John Penrhyn's name to her. He calls, demanding to see her, and I am obliged to deny him admittance. Mrs. Bradshaw knows all, so does Ina. Concealment would have been useless, even if I had desired it. I think we are all alike perplexed. Mrs. Bradshaw's quick method of deciding things, by what she is accustomed to call common sense, in this instance fails her. It is a question of conscience, and only conscience can decide it. We talked the matter over yesterday. I told her precisely what had passed, and she confessed that, putting herself in my place, she should feel as I do. But she blames me, as I blame myself, for not having more openly made known the state of affairs from the beginning.'

'It was not fair upon the young things,' she said. 'It is all very well to say you did not expect, or anticipate, or fear; but love is love, and the world is so thickly sown with it, that it may spring up at any moment. Putting aside the question of the right which one person—be it father or mother—has, to attempt to bind others after death (it is a right which, for myself, I entirely repudiate), there is no doubt that when these obstacles exist, they ought to be known. And I confess I don't understand why you did not make them known.'

'Simply because I considered it unnecessary,' was my

reply : 'and surely you can understand my repugnance to having matters so private and sacred generally discussed.'

'Only that they happened not to be private,' said Mrs. Bradshaw ; 'at least, they concerned others even more than they did yourself. But it is no use going over the ground of the past. There is no doubt that promises to the dead are sacred ; and, therefore, my dear friend, I feel for you—any way, I feel for you—no one can say how much.'

'If I have done wrong,' I said—'and I believe I have—I am most bitterly punished. But there was no wrong, in intention, it was but folly—blindness.'

'Follies are punished in this world, sins in the next, that is my creed,' said Mrs. Bradshaw : 'but if Agnes were not Agnes, she would cut the Gordian knot without delay.'

'Yes,' I replied ; 'and that conviction adds to the bitterness of my self-reproach. If she were resentful and rebellious, I could bear it far better.'

'John Penrhyn will not be so submissive,' continued Mrs. Bradshaw.

'Indeed, no. He has sent me a note this morning, insisting upon seeing Agnes before he goes back to England,—that is, before to-morrow. But he must not. The doctor will not allow it.'

'It might calm her mind.'

'By raising a conflict of doubt as to her duty ? He says that he can make her see—and he is convinced that ultimately he shall make me see—that such a promise as I gave is binding only under certain circumstances, which do not in this case exist.'

'He is a clever casuist, I doubt not,' said Mrs. Bradshaw :

'But Agnes will not be persuaded by him,' I con-

tinued; 'or, if she should be, it would only be to her misery. If she could put aside her father's wishes and my promise, she would only lay up for herself a store of self-reproach. Hers is not a mind to bear such a burden. It would have been very different with Ina.'

'And you mean to let the matter rest where it is, then?' said Mrs. Bradshaw—'to consider it ended?'

'I mean—don't ask me what I mean'—I exclaimed. 'There are moments when I almost feel that John Penrhyn is right. But when I come to the point of concession, I shrink back. And then I say to myself, that separation will weaken the feeling which is so strong now; that if they both know there is an invincible obstacle to their marriage, they will ultimately turn their thoughts in some other direction; and that this pledge of mine must—putting aside its sacredness—be a warning against the marriage, which I cannot be right in neglecting. Is not this the right way of looking at the case? Ought I not at least to try separation?'

'Perhaps so.'

'And Agnes will submit,' I said. 'She has submitted already, in spirit, though not in words.'

'And you have not spoken to her definitely?'

'No; I have taken the decision for granted. It was the only thing I could do, unless I meant to yield. Dr. Mallory imperatively forbids any further excitement.'

Mrs. Bradshaw was thoughtful. Then she said, 'You may be right; but I think John ought to be allowed to see her.'

At that moment our conversation was interrupted. I was sent for to Agnes' room.

She had just awakened from sleep, and was sitting up in bed, with a crimson shawl thrown round her, and her long silky chestnut hair, which had escaped from the net that held it, falling down over her shoulders. Her eyes

were bright with fever, her cheeks crimsoned, her lips parched, and she clutched nervously a letter which was lying open beside her. She did not wait for me to speak, but when the door was closed, and we were left alone, she said—

‘Mamma, he has written to me; but he must not write again. You will tell him so.’

‘If you wish it, my darling. But has he said anything to trouble you?’

‘He tells me, mamma, he thinks I do not love him; and, oh! I will try not. I will—indeed, I will.’

‘God will help you, my precious one, if it is right that you should not.’

‘But tell him not to write. I saw him in my dreams last night. I have prayed God not to let me see him again.’

I took hold of her burning hand, and for an instant she let it rest in mine, and then she drew it away, and there came an agonised burst of grief, which it was misery unutterable to hear.

I tried to soothe her, but the few words which escaped her showed how vain was the attempt.

‘Oh! mamma, mamma! why did you promise? What harm had he done? And I do love him;—say you will tell him I do;—oh, so dearly! But that is wicked. Please ask God to keep me from thinking about him. I want to do right, so much. Darling mamma, don’t cry. Do I make you miserable? I know you could not help it. I know it must be right.’

I listened to the disjointed sentences, and my heart grew sick with fear. What would—what could be the end of this? I took up John’s letter, for I thought it might give me some clue to the cause of this increased agitation. ‘May I read it, dear child?’ I said; and Agnes bent her head in acquiescence.

‘AGNES, MY OWN PRECIOUS AGNES—For you are

mine, and none can take you from me—I must see you; if that is forbidden, I must write. I deny the power of any promise to keep us apart. I will not recognise it. Say only that you love me with a love which is but a thousandth part of mine, and there is not a living being—not even your mother—who can separate us. God does not allow pledges which shall thus bind others. In His sight they cannot be valid. I call upon you by the love which you bear me to uphold me in my protest. It cannot be that you do not love me sufficiently,—that you can submit without an effort. The thought crosses my mind and maddens me. They tell me you are ill. You could not be ill if you felt as I do. You would be brave—resolved. Let us be true to one another, and none can come between us. I return to London to-morrow, but you will hear from me daily; and you will see me again speedily. I call Heaven to witness that I will never rest till I have made you mine, if only you will tell me that you have given your heart to me, as I have given mine to you, without reservation, save for the love of God. Do not be terrified with scruples. I know that we have right on our side, and right must and will conquer.

‘Yours for ever and ever,

‘JOHN PENRHYN.’

‘Is it wicked in him, mamma?’ said Agnes, eagerly. She had been watching my face whilst I was reading.

‘It is very natural, my child. I do not wonder at it.’

‘And it is not as he says? Oh no, it cannot be; it is a temptation. Take it away, mamma;’ and she pushed the letter from her.

A sudden thought crossed my mind. ‘My darling,’ I said, ‘this is not a matter which either you or I can rightly decide. We must have other advice—I should like to consult ——’

‘The Rector!’ exclaimed Agnes: her eyes sparkled with hope. ‘Mamma, ask him—but, no, it can’t be: it is a promise—it must not be broken. Mamma, dearest, pray for me:’ and a low moan of bitter anguish escaped her.

‘My own child,’ I said, ‘this is too grievous. If my life could be given to make you happy, it would be offered without a moment’s thought. You cannot doubt that. I only long to be quite certain of the right. If you wish that the Rector should be consulted, I am more than willing to hear what he will say.’

Agnes leant her head upon her hands, and I saw that she was praying. Presently she said, ‘Mamma, I wish to take up my cross; and God will help me. But let me see John. You need not be afraid now,’ she added, perceiving, I have no doubt, that my face expressed hesitation.

I could but kiss her, and whisper, would she forgive me? I was so very miserable.

And then she threw her arms round me, and called me her sweetest, dearest of mothers, who had done all for her always; and when my voice became inarticulate—for I felt as if my heart would break—she comforted and caressed me, and repeated, again and again, that it must all be right: the sorrow would be only for a time. ‘John and I may be together in Heaven, mamma, darling, may we not?’ she added, fixing her pleading eyes upon me.

I answered, ‘For ever and for ever, there, my child.’

‘But not here,’ she added in a low tone, and she shuddered, as if the utterance of the words brought back all the smothered anguish. Once more she murmured, ‘I must see John;’ and, fearing to disturb her more by refusing than by acceding to her request, I sent for him.

She was sitting up when he came, and, of course, I left them together. It was a long interview; but I waited,

walking up and down the corridor—dreading the excitement, longing to know what the effect of John's words would be; hearing the faint murmurs of his voice (that of Agnes was inaudible), and unable to prevent myself from trying to imagine the tenour of the conversation, as, from time to time, some tone louder than the rest gave me the idea that John was pleading, and gaining his cause. It must have been full an hour before he came out. He looked like a ghost, and would have rushed past me, but I stopped him.

‘What have you done?’ I asked.

‘Nothing, Mrs. Anstruther. You will have her death to answer for.’

‘Then,’ I said, ‘I shall have my own also; for my life is bound up in hers.’

‘You have made her scrupulous, unreasoning,’ he continued. ‘You have educated her with a strictness which narrows her judgment.’

‘Which means,’ I said, ‘that you cannot shake her determination.’

‘I cannot make her see that she would be happy,’ he exclaimed. ‘Yet she would, and must be, for I would make her so.’

‘John,’ I said, ‘you are talking now against your better knowledge. Nothing could make Agnes happy if her conscience were not at peace. And remember, if she could act against her sense of duty in this case, she might do so in others.’

‘It is no duty,’ he said, moodily; ‘the promise was made under a belief which was without foundation. That is my argument, and it is a fair one. Mrs. Anstruther, you must yourself own it.’

‘If I do not own it,’ I said, ‘it is not because I have no wish to do so.’

He looked up more brightly.

‘I am willing,’ I continued, ‘to put the case before some other person.’

‘To decide?’

‘No; I will not say to decide. I must abide by my own conscience. But I am willing to hear all that can be said. Will you be contented if I put it before Mr. L’Estrange? There is not a more upright, strict, yet calm-judging, man in England.’

‘He is a stick,’ said John. ‘He does not know what love is.’

Even at that moment I could scarcely forbear a smile. So ignorantly we judge of one another! ‘He will be unbiassed,’ I said, ‘except that he loves Agnes as his own child.’

‘Well; let it be. He may bring her round.’

‘And, John, you forgive me?’ I held out my hand.

He caught it eagerly. ‘Oh, Mrs. Anstruther! if you did but know how hard it is to think unkindly of you!’

And so he left me, and I lingered for a few moments in the corridor, dwelling upon the strange recollection that once before John Penrhyn’s prospects had, though unconsciously to us both, depended upon the question whether I might or might not break a promise—though, in that case, extorted under very different circumstances. It was an instance of that singular doubleness of events which often seems to pursue us in life; and which, if one could forget that there is an overruling Providence, might almost make one believe in a kind of fatality.

CHAPTER XLIV.

November 23 : Dernham Cottage.—I could not wait at Boulogne—for uncertainty and suspense were killing my child. I had promised to consult Mr. L'Estrange, and I felt that I must do so without delay. But—how frequently it so happens!—I wrote to the Rector, in order to be quite certain that he would be at home, and found that he had just been called away by the serious illness of his mother, and that his return was uncertain. Still, therefore, I delayed; but then the house agent wrote me word that a good offer had been made for the cottage, and that it was necessary I should give an answer at once; so I resolved to start immediately for England, and make my decision on the spot. If, as Mr. Neville hinted, there was a prospect that Lady Anson might relent, we certainly should not remain longer abroad. Dernham would certainly be better than Boulogne for Agnes. She requires the support of external duties at all times, and now they are especially necessary, and yet could not be found in a foreign country, which is in no sense home. So I resolved to go.

To leave Mrs. Bradshaw with my children was my great comfort; otherwise, the journey and its attendant circumstances were most trying. We have had unusually cold weather at Boulogne lately: snow actually set in for three days, and no one but myself ventured out; the roads were in such a state: and as for driving, it was next to impossible, up and down the steep streets. The day

before yesterday there was no snow, but the wind had risen, and the blasts were icy. I longed for some excuse for a respite, but could find none, as weather-wise people said that the next day was likely to be worse; and the steamer would then start later because of the tide, so that I should not get into London till dark. Whilst I was dressing, I watched the swaying of the poplar boughs, in a garden which I could just see from my window, and conjured up all kinds of miseries in the crossing, but there was nothing to be done. I packed my box, and at twelve Mrs. Bradshaw and I drove down to the port. No vessel was to be seen. We inquired the reason, and were told it had sailed about an hour before. The papers which had been put out, marking the times for departure, were, unfortunately, wrong. Unfortunate, indeed! worse than unfortunate, I thought it. I could but drive back, and mourn over Agnes' face of woe, and wile away the weary hours as best I might till yesterday morning, when the same ordeal had to be gone through—watching the boughs with dismal forebodings, saying sad good-b'yes, driving through the slippery streets, and standing shivering on the quay. But we were in time, and Mrs. Bradshaw put me under the charge of an old English admiral, who took me on board, and was polite enough to offer to cross with me, if it would be the least comfort to me; and when I gratefully declined, he insisted upon packing me up on deck, in the most approved fashion, making me lie down on a bench, with coats, and cloaks, and rugs enough over me to have smothered me; but, unhappily, there was a *hiatus* somewhere; and we were no sooner out of the harbour than the waves began to toss, and the bitter wind to blow, and the draughts, which insidiously wandered over, and round, and up and down my coverings, were worse in their effects than a regular tornado; for by the time I reached London I had all the symptoms of a very bad

cold. I slept in Margaret-street, at the house of a staid old woman—a former servant of Mrs. Bradshaw—who lets lodgings, and who condoled, and advised, and doctored me with white wine whey, and would fain have kept me with her till my cure was completed. But I would not hear of delay; and having nursed myself in the morning to please the old woman, I left London in the afternoon to please myself; and here I am, lonely, childless, servantless (for there is no one but Stephen's wife in the house), and I could almost say hopeless—for now that I am come I do not see what good I am to do, or what good anyone can do to me. If I keep my promise, I make my child miserable for life; if I break it—I cannot do it—the scene comes before me again—my husband's look, his earnestness, his trust. I cannot do it.

November 24.—I was at breakfast this morning, when Captain Shaw was announced. I had not seen him before for months. He looks old and ill. He apologised most courteously. He was on his way to his young friend Henry Anson, he said, and could not resist calling upon me beforehand, as he had heard that I was arrived.'

I started, as though he had approached some unexpected topic.

I felt ashamed to own how little Ina's difficulties were in my mind. My one thought for the last fortnight had been Agnes. But I roused myself to give him my attention.

'I am obliged to you greatly, my dear Captain Shaw,' I said; 'and you know you are welcome at any hour; but I don't think I can send any message to Mr. Anson, if that is what you mean. You know that I have pledged myself to Lady Anson for a year, not to recognise the engagement.'

'True, my dear madam, and quite right; but I have seen Lady Anson.'

‘And has she changed her mind?’ I said, in a tone which I knew had not the least heartiness in it.

The old man looked much surprised. ‘Lady Anson is not easily convinced. I have had much difficulty in placing my arguments before her. I stayed with her for three days at Norwood, at the request of my young friend—and, I will also say, at her own request—for she expressed herself willing to hear all that could be brought forward. Each night we talked together till late, and I went to rest believing that I had brought her round to my views, and each morning I found that I had to begin again at the same point as on the preceding day.’

‘I am really greatly indebted to you, my dear sir,’ I said. ‘And as for Mr. Anson and Ina, they can never be sufficiently grateful to you for thus interesting yourself in their affairs. But I really do feel now that it will be best for all parties to let the matter rest where it is.’

‘Pardon me, my dear madam; I am an old officer, and I do not like to retire, more especially when I have made a breach in the enemy’s fortress.’

‘Then Lady Anson has, in a measure, yielded!’ I exclaimed, and a gleam of satisfaction crossed my mind, as I felt that one of my children, though not the nearest and dearest, might be happy.

‘She has yielded, and she has not yielded. Allow me, my dear madam, to put the case before you in the light in which it appears to myself, and in which I endeavoured to represent it to Lady Anson. It would seem to me that the events of this world can only be judged of rightly when seen as they will appear to us when we look back upon them from another world (for I do not doubt that we shall so look back upon them); if, therefore, there is anything in the affection my young friend Harry and your daughter bear each other, which, when thus regarded, must awaken regret, it is well—it must be

right, indeed, to pause before sanctioning it. It was upon this point that Lady Anson and I at first, unhappily, differed.'

'Lady Anson has heard false and exaggerated reports,' I said; 'and I am afraid she has not taken the trouble to inquire into their truth. Certainly she has asked no questions of me.'

'Even so, dear madam. I will not distress you by repeating those reports. I am sure they have reached your ear from the very fact that they are evil, and therefore travel upon rapid wings. But Mr. Neville—a gentleman for whom I entertain the most profound respect—has taken upon himself to contradict them. Lady Anson has been brought to own that they admitted of explanation. The difficulty has been to lead her further. In fact, she would neither believe nor disbelieve, she would neither consent nor refuse to consent, she would only stand still.'

In spite of my annoyance, I could not forbear a smile; it was so precisely what I should have expected of Lady Anson. But the old Captain went on with unmoved gravity.

'It was a difficult position to be placed in, my dear madam; but I had my young friend's interests at heart, and, I may add, those of your daughter—a very sweet young lady, for whom I trust God has in store many years of happiness—and I persevered; I urged my case, and by battering the wall repeatedly, I at last, as I stated just now, succeeded in making a breach. If there was no definite objection to the marriage, there could be no definite refusal of consent; and if there was no definite refusal of consent, then there must be a virtual assent. My logic may have been theoretically faulty—it is many years since I studied the science—but I believe that practically it will be found to be right. At any rate, it was conclusive with Lady Anson—so far that I obtained from her the permis-

sion to say to my young friend, that she desired him only to delay till the year of mourning was expired; after that, she would interpose no difficulties in the way of his wishes: but in that case, she stated that she should desire not to return to the Manor, but to find a home in another neighbourhood.'

'And have you conveyed this message to Mr. Anson?' I said.

'I am about to do so now; but knowing that you were arrived, I felt that it might be wiser to communicate it to you first, and hear what you had to say upon the subject.'

'I have nothing to say,' I replied. 'If indeed you ask me whether I like the idea of my daughter's marrying into a family where she is only tolerated, and where the fact of the marriage involves a coldness between the mother and son, I say plainly I do not. But these young people have carved out their own lot, and as they are to enjoy its pleasure and bear its pain, it is for them to decide concerning it.'

'And you will send no message to Henry Anson?' said the old Captain.

'None, until he and his mother have come to a full understanding.'

Captain Shaw looked disappointed.

'You think me hard,' I said; 'but consider—the very moment I utter a word, or give a sign, I shall be said to have urged on the marriage.'

'You may be right,' was the reply; 'but a few words from you would be very cheering. Henry has had many lonely weeks, and has been far from well, and he has been sadly dispirited; for he has been accustomed to cheerfulness at the Manor, and his mother and sisters have, up to this time, been devotedly attached to him. Indeed, I believe they are so still.'

'Nevertheless, I must keep to my resolution,' I said.

‘When the engagement is publicly made known, as having Lady Anson’s sanction, then I will come forward and give mine. In the meantime, my dear Captain Shaw, let me thank you from the very bottom of my heart: you have acted the part of a true, kind friend.’

‘I would I could have done more,’ he answered. ‘I believed when I went to Norwood that I should fully succeed in bringing Lady Anson to a cordial feeling; but it is impossible.’

‘Quite impossible,’ I said. ‘Where persons have a decided cause of complaint against others, explanations may be of some use; but where there is anything like vague prejudice, with an inclination to hold out against all evidence, an attempt at explanation only does harm. The very consciousness of a weak cause, which will not bear looking into, increases the determination to support it. Lady Anson will never like Ina.’

‘I fear not,’ was the old man’s reply, uttered sorrowfully and kindly.

I shook hands with him again, and said, ‘Thank you a thousand times:’ and he left me.

He has been the peacemaker of the village for years, and he will have his reward in Heaven.

CHAPTER XLV.

November 25.—Henry Anson has been with me. I expected no less. The path is smoothed for him: he has written to his mother, and he professes himself happy; but, unless I mistake greatly, it is a happiness far from perfect. The extorted consent is, as regards feeling, tantamount to a refusal. And he has been accustomed from his infancy to lean upon his mother, and so long as he leaned upon her to be petted. Now to be thrust aside is a great trial. He talked to me nearly the whole time about Lady Anson's determination not to return to the Manor. 'It was so hasty,' he said; 'he could not marry for the next six months, and in the meantime he should be alone; and she would put herself to a great expense for nothing. For his own part, he had never seen the necessity of her going away at all. The house was very much larger than he and Ina could, under any circumstances, require; and he knew that for his mother to remain, was the arrangement his father had desired; and if he could only see and talk to her about it, he could not help believing that he should at last bring her round to the idea.'

For Ina's sake I was obliged to suggest that it might be better to leave matters as they were. 'He must remember, that however attached Lady Anson might be to him, she certainly would not be fond of his wife.'

'Oh yes, if they lived together; why should not they be? Everyone must love Ina.'

‘But Ina might not love everyone in return,’ I observed. This seemed quite a new light to him.

‘To be sure,’ he said, ‘it might not quite do ; but yet—such a large house!—it did seem a monstrous pity not to use it ; and it was what his father had always wished.’

So he went on, resting always upon some other person’s wish or opinion ; having, apparently, no power to uphold any of his own. I marvelled more and more as I listened, that he had held out about his marriage ; and yet in thinking things over, I don’t know that there is anything to be astonished at. This kind of obstinacy is very common : for the firmness which rests upon inclination, and not upon principle, is, after all, only another form of weakness. The prospect of six months’ solitude seemed Henry Anson’s great trial ; and he was very much relieved when I gave him a hope that we might return to Dernham sooner than we had talked of. He begged that I would go back to the Manor with him, and look over the house, and tell him if I thought there was anything to be done which could make it more comfortable for Ina ; and then again he lamented his mother’s absence. In fact, he seized upon me as a safety-valve, and poured out all that was in his mind, without a shadow of reserve, and in a way which was most curious. As to going with him to the Manor and giving suggestions for alterations, that I entirely declined. I think I made him perceive that it would be out of taste. It will be difficult to deal with him, I see—he is always wanting support, because he has always had it. What a strange fancy it is which some parents have—that of putting their children, of all ages, into go-carts, thinking they will be safer in consequence ! It was Sir John’s practice, and Lady Anson adopted it as a matter of course.

December 1.—It has been good for me to have to think of Ina, for so my thoughts have been diverted from Agnes. The Rector returns to-day ; to-morrow I must see

him. Mrs. Bradshaw has sent me frequent accounts of all that is going on, which is little enough. She says, in her letter to-day :—

‘ Your little sick bird droops, and I fear will continue to droop, till you give her change of thought. Suspense is very indigestible food. You know my delight in fresh air. I try to persuade her to share it, but she constantly makes excuses, and so bonnie little Essie and I have to wander forth together ; for Ina has made friends with Madame de Brézé, and is often walking with her. Don’t think that I object to my companion—very much the reverse. I could stand at a distance and all but worship Agnes ; but I should like Essie by my fireside. The one would be my guardian angel, the other my child and companion. As regards Essie’s tastes—natural history, unfortunately, is not a study to be pursued in the streets of Boulogne ; so we have taken lately to history natural—such as you and I learnt when we went to school, and before it became the fashion to make friends of spiders and earwigs. We have regular *séances historiques*, and read the readable portions of Michelet, over which Agnes goes into an ecstasy of poetical admiration, whilst Essie opens her laughing blue eyes very wide, and says, “Is he in earnest? It sounds like rhodomontade.” You see we are doing well, though we might do better. I have a glimmering of the mystery connected with John Penrhyn’s intercourse with Baron von Bronnen, which will turn out to be no mystery at all, if facts be as I suspect. The new clergyman who has undertaken the service at our English chapel in the Haute Ville, proves to be an old acquaintance of mine, a Mr. Paine ; and seeing me at church last Sunday, he called, and we had a little talk about things in general ; and he told me that he had been visiting a poor creature in a miserable lodging who was dying, and that she had informed him

she had grand German relations, and had once occupied a high position, with a great deal more of the same kind, which interested him. In fact, I suspect she gave him a history of her life, though he did not, of course, enter into the details with me. But, from one or two things, I gathered that she was almost entirely dependent upon the generosity of some unknown individual, who assisted her—not directly, because she did not choose her condition to be fully known—but through a brother who was then in Boulogne. Must not the poor woman be Lady Chase, and is not this just the kind of thing John Penrhyn would do? I gave Mr. Paine what little help I could for her, and told him that if he thought I could do any good I would go and visit her. But he says she is so dreadfully sensitive about being seen in her condition of poverty, that he could not advise it as yet, though he will try to open the door for me. In the meantime, I put her name into my prayers, and say over to myself that verse in the Psalms, “We bring our years to an end, as a tale that is told.” Accustomed as one is to the third volumes of the sensation novels of this strange world, one can never reach the last page without a start of surprise. And now, good-b’ye, dear friend, I think of you, and long for you, and feel for you. If that dear good angular Rector can untwist the intricate thread of your difficulties, I promise—I was going to say that I will never laugh at him again; but that would have been presumptuous,—undertaking more than mortal can perform. He is the last man I should have chosen as a counsellor in a love affair, but doubtless Agnes knows best. They are both of the genus Saint, and so I suppose they understand each other in a way which we naughty people can’t enter into.

‘Yours affectionately,

‘S. BRADSHAW.’

‘Dear Mrs. Bradshaw!—I feel inexpressibly indebted to her for all this thoughtfulness for my children. It is quite out of her usual routine. She cares no more for Michelet than she does for Jack the Giant-killer. Travels and biographies are the only things she ever reads for her own pleasure. But she has a marvellous power of self-adaptation when it is a question of kindness.

A note from Agnes was enclosed in Mrs. Bradshaw’s envelope:—

‘DARLING MAMMA,—You will not forget to tell the Rector that I want only to be sure that I am right, and that I am quite prepared to give up everything. If we go on loving each other and trying to do right, perhaps God will not let us be very long apart—for you say we may love each other in Heaven. I don’t want the Rector to think at all about what will make me happy. I am afraid he may. He is so very kind to me. But please beg him not. I wonder whether John will see him. He told me he should. But, dearest mamma, if John and the Rector should agree, could it make any difference in the right? I was thinking about that last night, but it made my head ache very much, and I could not go on. And then I did not sleep well, and I am very tired to-day; but I shall be better when it is all settled, anyhow. John has written me several notes, but I have asked him not to go on doing so, because it only makes me worse. If I must give up my wishes, I would try to do so heartily. Do you remember the little print you once gave me of the child looking at the cross, as it lay on the ground, and not having courage to lift it? I am afraid that may be like me, and so I try to put away everything which makes the cross heavier. John’s letters do that. They make me love him so very, very much! Oh, darling mamma! how hard all this must be for you! But

I do pray God to comfort you ; and you will be quite sure, —will you not?—that I know it is all for the best, and that it would be quite impossible for you to help it ?

‘ Your very loving child,

‘ AGNES ANSTRUTHER.’

The struggle of mind is very evident in this letter. It makes me terribly anxious. John Penrhyn comes to-night. We see the Rector together to-morrow. It was my own proposal.

CHAPTER XLVI.

December 2.—John and I were at the Rectory this morning by appointment, at eleven o'clock. I never remember to have felt, during the whole course of my life, so utterly nervous and powerless. We were shown into the study. The Rector kept us waiting for nearly a quarter of an hour—some urgent parish business detained him. He came in at last, evidently flurried, and rather absent,—pushed his hand through his scanty grey locks, and twitched his mouth, as is his wont when he is discomposed; at the same time laying his watch on the table, as a warning to us not to be too lengthy. The latter is always his business mode of managing things, even when he is really interested. On the present occasion he had not the least idea what we wished to talk to him about: we had merely said that we wanted to see him on particular business.

I began by a few commonplace apologies for intruding upon him.

He hesitated, and did not give me any comfort in the way of politeness, but asked bluntly how Agnes was.

That opened the way at once, and I said directly that it was chiefly on her account I had come: and then I turned to John, and told him that it was for him to say what our business was. 'It is a question of serious moment,' I added, 'on which Mr. Penrhyn and I hold somewhat different opinions, and are therefore anxious to have advice. I will leave him to explain it alone. In

the meantime, if you will allow me, I will go into the garden.'

This was quite an unpremeditated move on my part. But it struck me suddenly that it would be impossible for John to speak freely in my presence. I opened the glass window before the Rector could help me, and went out upon the lawn, and there for more than half an hour I walked up and down, soothing myself by movement, but, in my extreme nervousness, totally unable to collect my thoughts; and all the time haunted by two verses of Victor Hugo's poetry, which Essie had repeated to me the day before I left Boulogne, and which I kept on saying over and over to myself, putting no meaning into the words, but only uttering them like a parrot :—

Puisque le cadran, quand il sonne,
Ne nous promet rien pour demain,
Puisqu'on ne connaît plus personne
De ceux qui vont dans le chemin,

Mets ton esprit hors de ce monde !
Mets ton rêve ailleurs qu'ici-bas !
Ta perle n'est pas dans notre onde !
Ton sentier n'est pas sous nos pas.

And all the time I had a certain consciousness of the quietness of the day—of its vapourous atmosphere and bluish mistiness, of the low gleaming light through the evergreens, and the pale sunshine on the moist earthy turf, and of a tame robin hopping about the borders; besides a more particular impression of a straggling purple chrysanthemum, which had outlived its generation, and stood up flauntingly in front of a dark evergreen. Every now and then I stopped and listened, thinking that the window was opened and I was summoned; but there were several false alarms. At length, however, John Penrhyn appeared, looking very white, and, with a kind of determined impatience of manner, came up to me, and said, ' Mrs.

Anstruther, I have detained you longer than I thought I should ; but the Rector is prepared now to hear all you may wish to say.' So I went in.

The Rector's manner was quite changed: it was full of the kindest sympathy, the deepest interest. There was even something like a glistening in his eye, when he said, as I seated myself by the fire, turning my face from the light, 'I am sorry for your dear little girl, sorry for you—very sorry.'

'But you see no way out of the difficulty?' I replied, inquiringly.

'None, I fear, which will be quite satisfactory. Promises are sacred things.'

'But not promises made under a misconception!' exclaimed John Penrhyn, coming forward from the window, near which he was standing.

'The question of misconception is scarcely one into which we can enter,' said the Rector. 'There was cause for Colonel Anstruther's objection to the marriage, though he may have exaggerated it. I think,' he added, 'that my friend Mrs. Anstruther'—and he turned to me—'will not be satisfied with this excuse for breaking her word?'

'No,' I said, decidedly; 'I should not.'

'But,' continued the Rector, still addressing me, 'although the promise is no doubt binding on you, I question whether it can be considered equally so on Agnes; and Colonel Anstruther apparently saw this. If I understand rightly, he admitted the possibility that his children might marry without your consent. He put a clause into his will to that effect. If they did so, they were to give up their fortune. It appears to me, therefore, that the alternative is open to Agnes: either she may demand her mother's consent, and on its refusal give up Mr. Penrhyn; or she may marry without it, and give up her fortune.'

It was a new light. I turned to John, expecting some exclamation of satisfaction. None came, and I felt pained.

There was a very awkward silence.

‘This is not what you anticipated?’ said the Rector, addressing John.

‘You are hard upon me,’ he replied. ‘You admit a difficulty which, to me, is based upon a falsity; you get rid of it by a suggestion which cuts at the root of all my prospects of present happiness; and then you wish me to be thankful.’

‘How cuts at the root of all your prospects?’ said the Rector.

‘How am I to take a wife to India when I can make no provision for her?’ was the reply. ‘You don’t suppose I have been fool enough not to think of the future. My only hope for the present was that we could live upon Neville’s allowance, and what I could make by my profession, with, perhaps, some little help from Mrs. Anstruther. But what I rested upon was the thought that Agnes’ money could be settled upon herself, and that I might add to it by insuring my life—a difficult matter, though, when India is concerned—so that in the event of my death she might live in comfort. All this is at an end now. It may be years before I can put by sufficient to make it prudent to marry. Mrs. Anstruther, you see it, I am sure,’ he said, turning to me.

‘Yes, indeed I do,’ I answered.

‘And you could not, you would not trust her’—he began, but he checked himself—‘no, it would be wrong, selfish.’

‘And if I could,’ I said, ‘I believe that Agnes herself would interpose an objection. I very much doubt if her conscience would be satisfied by this idea of forfeiting her fortune. It is a sacrifice she would not understand. She

is too young, too unworldly. She does not, in fact, realise that she has or ever will have any money of her own; and if she were to marry now on this condition, she would still feel that she was acting against her father's wishes. The only way of soothing her upon this point will, I fully believe, be that which seems likely to be a necessity—I mean, waiting a few years. During that time, if nothing should occur to interrupt—to pain—I felt that I was getting upon an awkward topic, and stopped.

‘I don’t quite understand,’ said John, anxiously.

‘I mean,’ I said, ‘that though I honestly believe if my husband had known you he would have felt the confidence in you which I do; yet, considering his strong dread of hereditary tendencies, I think he would have required a test. I think he would have said, “Go to India, show that you can stand temptation, then come back and marry.” I believe, if I put this before Agnes it may satisfy her, and that nothing else will. This, however, you must observe, has nothing to do with my consent, but only with Agnes’ feelings.’

‘And if I act upon this, how long will it be before I shall be in a position to marry?’ exclaimed John. ‘Probably years.’

‘When Agnes is one-and-twenty,’ said the Rector, drily, ‘her fortune will be her own.’

‘But to be forfeited if she should become my wife,’ said John; ‘for Mrs. Anstruther will never break her promise.’

‘I question whether a court of equity would recognise the promise,’ answered the Rector; ‘at least, it might be a question to be tried.’

‘Then return in four years and try it, John,’ I said. ‘Never would anyone rejoice in gaining a verdict as I should in losing it.’

He could not accept the hope—it was too vague, too

distant. He only murmured, 'The promise! the promise! Why was it made?'

'Why, indeed?' I said. 'But, John, you little know the wretchedness it has caused, and must still cause, me. Sad as the separation will be for you and Agnes, it will be ten times worse for me to think that I have occasioned it.'

'It was not you,' he exclaimed, 'but the unfair, bitter prejudice. If I could see it all as God's ordering, it would be different; but my reason, my heart, my sense of justice, rebel against it. The happiness of the living to be sacrificed to the suspicion of the dead! It is intolerable.'

'My husband had but one most anxious wish,' I said—'to guard against future evils.'

'He would have done better to have committed his wish to God,' said the Rector solemnly.

And John uttered a fervent 'Amen.'

A knock at the door interrupted us. Some one wished to see the Rector on business. John and I made our exit through the window into the garden, and there we waited for about ten minutes, during which time I gathered from John how it was that he had ever seen sufficiently through Agnes' shyness and reserve to give him boldness for his offer. It was but a trifle, he said, which had first made him think she cared for him. He saw her change colour when she heard him say to Mr. Digby that he was convinced it would be right to go to India. That gave him the first hope; and when he spoke of it to Marietta, she strengthened it: 'but Mrs. Neville was cruel,' he added, with a wintry smile, more sad than tears; 'she sent me away from Chilhurst, because she said nothing should be carried on there without your sanction.'

'Just like Marietta,' I replied,—'straightforward, honest as the day.'

‘She need not have been afraid,’ he continued; ‘I should never have spoken to Agnes as I did if it had not been in your presence. But why do we talk in this way? it makes me think there is reality in the matter. It will be far better to be off to London, pack up my things, write a good-b’ye to Agnes—for I can’t trust myself to see her—and then go.’

He spoke very bitterly.

I could not comfort him. Till he can see it all as God’s ordering, there can be no comfort for him. But I told him that, even if he differed from the Rector and myself, I hoped, for his own sake, he would not endeavour to influence Agnes to take his view of the matter, for I felt sure that it would only bring suffering in the end. He did not know what a sensitive, even morbid conscience hers was.

‘Influence her!’ he exclaimed; ‘I would as soon endeavour to influence a planet to depart from its course. She is high above me—and perhaps——’

‘Perhaps you would love her less if she could be influenced?’

‘Not love her less, God knows! If she gave herself to me as I am tempted to give myself to her, life would be an intoxication. But she is ideal—let me keep her as she is—perfect! She would not be my angel-guide if she were different.’

The Rector joined us then. In his strange abrupt way he made no reference to the subject under discussion, but merely said, ‘I should like to send my love to Agnes, and perhaps I may write to her.’

‘No!’ exclaimed John, impatiently; ‘thank you, no, I shall see her.’

The Rector’s glance at me showed a little surprise.

‘Mr. Penrhyn will like to tell his own tale,’ I observed; ‘but Agnes will write to you, and thank you for the help

you have given. I think we shall all be of one mind, so far as action is concerned.'

'But you cannot quite feel that my suggestion is the right one?' said the Rector, addressing John.

'I cannot feel that anything is right now,' was the reply—and John walked on a few steps, but recovering himself, he came back to the Rector, and offered him his hand. That was all; he did not say anything. Then he took leave of me also, and walked off across the fields to the village.

'Poor fellow!' I said.

The Rector only looked after him, long and silently.

CHAPTER XLVII.

January 1, 18 . . : Dernham Cottage.—This day was to have been spent abroad, but Lady Anson's consent to the marriage having changed the aspect of affairs, and an unexpected offer for our house at Boulogne rendering it easy to return, we all came back three days before Christmas-day. And now the world seems in a measure bright again. My dear Agnes has accepted the decision made for her with a quiet good sense and cheerful hope, which have been most comforting to me. The fact that she had no time to form definite day-dreams, and therefore had none to be crushed, has been a great help to her; and the feeling that she may, without offence, give her heart to John, is in itself a sufficient joy, apart from all idea of the future. I wish I could say the same of John. He has been, and is, most sorely wounded and disappointed. He tries, I am sure, to be the same to me as before, but there is a difference which I cannot help feeling. He no longer meets me with the same open-hearted confidence. The engagement—for such it certainly is, though I have never been asked to consent to it—is a tacit one. He writes to Agnes almost daily, but he says little or nothing to me. He expresses no wish to see anything more of Charlie, or to help him; in fact, Charlie says that, up to Christmas, John had scarcely been near him. All this is natural; I cannot blame him for it. He knows that he has been looked upon with doubt, and he cannot get over the painful feeling which this has created. But I comfort

myself with the conviction that the sense of estrangement will not last for ever. He will be more cordial to me, and more resigned to his position, when he is once in India. Every day will then be bringing him nearer the object of his hope—for, independent of the doubt as to the legal decision, should the question regarding Agnes' fortune be tried, I have not the slightest misgiving as to his success—no one has who knows him. In the meantime, if I could put myself in his place, I believe I should feel as he does. It is a very severe discipline for a man of his eager temperament. That it is good for him, one cannot question; but to say that I do not daily reproach myself for being the cause of it, would be untrue. I think, indeed, that for Agnes herself, it is very desirable to wait a few years—she is so extremely young. But I could not, under the circumstances, have made age an objection, if there had been no other. They could not have been married till the summer, and by that time Agnes will be eighteen. Still I am thankful to keep her with me a few years longer. I dare not say this, however, to John, for to him it can be no comfort. My darling is an angel in her sweetness, and submission, and unselfishness. She is daily drawing nearer and nearer to her Saviour, and she is leading John nearer also. I have once or twice lately seen little notes of his, referring to something which she has said, and I can judge from them how they help each other. John was touchingly humble in one especially which came yesterday, owning himself so infinitely inferior to Agnes in the feeling of submission to God's Will, and saying how he strove for it, and prayed that it might be given him. It was the expression of a mind intensely earnest—bent upon mastering every rebellious feeling; but having a severe struggle to go through. 'There is a haunting devil,' he writes, 'which whispers to me that, after all, it is not God's Will, but man's; and,

again, I am one of the wicked, tossing on the troubled sea, and having no rest.'

Agnes talked to me about this afterwards, and showed me just now part of her answer to him. In her simplicity she sometimes sees more clearly than philosophers into the depths of the well where they say truth is to be found. She says to him, 'Is it really wicked in you to think as you say you do? It does not seem to me so; and perhaps you would be better if you did not call it so. Mamma always tells me that it is bad for us to fancy things wrong which are not wrong, because it injures our power of judgment, and you know how apt I am to do this; and so I have learnt to try against it, and to endeavour to see things truly. And, therefore, dearest John, I should be so glad if you could feel, what I am quite sure of, that God is not angry with you for being troubled, or looking upon the trial as coming from man's will—because in one way it really does so come; and that He is just as sorry for us both, and for you especially, as mamma herself is, and no doubt would have prevented it all if it had been good and wise. In that way of looking at the trial it would seem to me easier to bear; because, you see, though it is somehow man's ordering, it is God's permitting. Perhaps He means to teach us to be patient and trust, and knows that we could not learn this as well in any other way. At any rate, when we come to Heaven I don't think we shall wish that we had had even one pang less. But I know it is very much harder for you than for me—not because I love you less than you do me, for I have given you my whole earthly heart, and love you as I never knew how to love anyone before, not even my precious mother; but because you are going away alone, and have had such pleasant fancies about our being together, and therefore you have such a great disappointment to bear; whilst I can only marvel that God

should have been so wonderfully good as to give you to me at all, and to take away the thought that it is wrong to love you, which was so very terrible. That thought comes back to me indeed sometimes—as your wicked spirit, as you call it, comes to you—but I try against it; if it is very bad I go and talk it out with mamma, and so it goes away. Please, darling John, write yours out to me always, and I think it will do the same.’

Controversialists might find a good deal to discuss in this letter as to man’s free-will and God’s predestination, but, practically, my dear child’s simple piety has put the case in its truest and most comforting light. There are so many trials in life which come to us through man, and to which, for that reason, one feels scarcely called upon to resign oneself; and they can only be accepted calmly and religiously by the conviction that, however they have arisen, they might have been prevented if God had willed to interpose, and therefore they are really trials sent by Him just as much as those which are more directly of His ordering.

I look forward into this new year with a trembling presentiment of change. If nothing should interfere, Ina is to be married in June. The fact is known now publicly. But there is still the awkwardness that Lady Anson will show no cordiality. I very much doubt myself whether she will be present at the wedding. Henry Anson went to Norwood about a week ago, and came back half angry, half dispirited. Lady Anson, forgetting Mr. Neville’s contradiction of the exaggerated reports, had repeated them all to him, assuring him that Ina had actually engaged herself to Lord Hopeton whilst she was professing to be attached to him. He told this to Ina, and she brought him to me, and we had a regular explanation. He declared he never believed this story; and yet I saw that he had been influenced by it; and Ina reproached

him, and complained of his mother, whom he defended, implying that there was a ground for the report, however exaggerated it might be. This, naturally enough, made Ina very angry; because he knew quite well, when he was staying at Worthington, why she continued to receive Lord Hopeton's attentions as quietly as she did. It was as a blind for his sake—at least in a measure; and though unquestionably she was wrong, yet for him now to reproach her with it was dreadfully unfair. But all that went on at that time has passed from his mind, and because the world, or rather his mother, quarrels with Ina, he thinks he is bound to find fault too.

It was rather a serious lover's quarrel at the time, but it did not last; for Ina's influence is pre-eminent when she is with him. It is only when he is away that he cannot stand against old associations and authority.

Ina herself is only too glad to be rid of Lady Anson, and she does not see how the family estrangement may work against her future happiness. She believes that she shall keep the place she has won in Henry Anson's heart, and she delights in exercising her power over him. In fact, I am not quite sure whether she does not rather rejoice in a little quarrel, because of the pleasure of bringing him round to the confession that he has treated her badly, and making him ask for forgiveness.

Poor child! she has a great deal to learn as regards duty and Christian principle, and yet there is little outwardly to find fault with. I don't know anyone who, on the surface, lives a more amiable life. It is in her general tone, her conversation, her aims, and interests, that the deficiency is seen; and if ever I touch upon these she entirely agrees with me in theory. I think the difference in practice between Agnes and her is, that Agnes looks out for duty, Ina accepts it; and, only accepting it, too often fails to perceive it.

Mrs. Penrhyn has adopted a new mode of looking at things. Despairing at last of making Ina, Lady Hopeton, she is throwing herself with cordiality into the idea of her being Mrs. Anson, and is already suggesting preparations for the *trousseau*. To judge from the list of necessary articles of dress which she has furnished, one would think that Ina was at least to be a duchess. I should be more provoked with her if she were not as practically as she is theoretically lavish. She promises Ina a hundred pounds towards the *trousseau*. At the same time she throws out a suggestion that the wedding should take place at Arling. 'She cannot,' she says, 'give up the idea of being present at so very important an event as the marriage of her dear grandchild; yet at her age, and in her infirm state of health, she feels herself scarcely equal to undertaking the fatigue of the journey. If she should live till June, it would be the greatest happiness possible for her to receive the whole party under her roof;' and, she adds, 'If I could persuade dear Lady Worthington to overlook the past and to be present on the occasion, it would go far to silence those evil reports which have been so maliciously spread, and have caused us all such great pain.'

Who caused the malicious reports? Yet there is some sense and reason in what Mrs. Penrhyn says, though it goes sorely against my inclination. There might be awkwardness here. Lady Anson's absence (if she should be absent) would be very marked. All these communications are made to Ina. Neither my opinion nor my consent is ever asked. Ina is beginning to feel this for me. She brought me the last letter quite shyly, and said 'six months was a long time to look forward, and no doubt her grandmamma would write to me when the time drew near. But what did I think of the idea?' I told her that I saw many advantages in it; and then she said 'that

she thought Henry would be relieved, because he did so dread the gossip of Dernham, and especially of the Harcourts.' So do I dread the gossip of Dernham; but whether the presence of Mrs. Penrhyn and the scrutiny of Mrs. Huddersfield will be much more endurable I greatly doubt. However, the only question really to be considered is, what is best for Ina? and upon this point I think there is little doubt. As for myself, 'Time and the hour run through the roughest day,' and I shall get through it somehow, or, rather, I shall be helped through it. John Penrhyn expects to sail for India in the middle of March. That is the first trial, and all others will seem light after it.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

March 20.—I thought that by this time my darling child's heaviest sorrow—and I may say mine also—would be over. But John has been, and is, ill. He has had a bad attack of fever, brought on, I am afraid, by distress of mind—for so Mr. Neville who went to see him when he was at the worst, has written me word. For four-and-twenty hours he was in danger, but after that he rallied wonderfully, and then Mr. Neville urged his coming to us to recruit. He has been with us for a week now, and is really much better, but still by no means strong. A sea-voyage will be the best thing for him, though he would fain take the overland route in order to save time. His heart is set upon beginning work in India at once. I am thankful myself to have him here for this quiet visit, when his mind is comparatively undisturbed—for he has been peremptorily ordered to put aside everything in the way of preparation, and give himself a fortnight, at least, of absolute rest. Under no other circumstances would he have consented to this period of inaction. But he is very happy—painfully happy—in it. Agnes is his nurse, and reads to him, and takes short walks with him, and exercises her gentle authority in making him obey his doctor's orders, and is growing every day more and more fond of him, and he of her, and they are happy; and I?—I try not to be miserable: that is all I can do.

They are both now so good to me! I said to John last night, as we happened to be together alone, that for his

sake and Agnes', I could wish that this season of rest could be prolonged for months ; but for myself, it was only storing up for me a more bitter pang of regret, because every day it made me long more and more that my husband could have known him as I am learning to know him.

He smiled, with that singularly sweet smile of his which first caught my attention years ago, and insensibly drew my heart to him, and, turning from the reference to the subject so painful to me, replied—

'You won't wish it, if you spoil me with flattery. Agnes is wiser than you are. She gives me wholesome advice—tells me what I am to think of, what I am to read, and how I am to write to her. If I could but believe her, the time will pass more quickly for me than for her.'

'And I believe you will have the support and stimulus of success in your profession,' I said.

'God knows! But it shall not be for want of effort that I fail. They tell me it is a wide field, with chances for everyone.'

I could not bear to keep upon the surface in this way, and I said, rather abruptly, 'John, I want you to say that you forgive me.'

He took my hand, as he answered fervently, 'I have nothing to forgive—it was a mistake.'

'But the decision—the parting—could it have been otherwise?'

He slightly drew back, and said, hurriedly, 'It is done, and it is right. I would not have it altered. Don't ask me more.'

I know I must have looked wretched, for I felt so. And then, in an instant, he softened, and the old affectionate tone of confidence, which I had so missed, came back.

'Agnes tells me you are unhappy,' he said. 'She begs me to comfort you, if I can; but I don't see that it is

possible. We can only, both of us, take things as they are, and make the best of them. That is what I wish to do; and, God helping me, good shall come out of this, as it may out of everything. I believe I shall be a better man for the trial. And if the reward should come at last, it will be more than the best of human beings could dare to expect, for it will be to have an angel for a wife. And if not——'

His voice faltered, and he could not finish the sentence, neither could I for him, still less could I speak to him, and so we wished each other 'good night.'

March 26.—John is gone back to London. His ship is advertised to sail this day fortnight. I have promised to meet him, with Agnes, at Southampton. It is *acting* a consent to the engagement, I know; but what can I do? I talked to the Rector about it. He said that, unless I had made up my mind that it was right to use my influence to break off the marriage (which, of course, I have not), he thought I owed a duty to Agnes to soften the bitterness of parting in any way I could. I should not make or mar the engagement by taking her to Southampton. And so we are going. She is, upon the whole, bright and hopeful. Now that the Rector, and John, and myself are all of one mind, at least apparently, her conscience is at rest. I am more grateful to John than I can say for having yielded the point so far. The misery it would have been to her to have had to decide now between his claim and mine would have been terrible. I really don't think she would have been able to bear up against it.

April 10.—Agnes and I went to Southampton the day before yesterday. Charlie came from London with John. We were all at the hotel together. At first I was inclined to object to Charlie's coming; but afterwards I thought it would be better, because it would make our going less marked, and would give Agnes and John an

opportunity of being together without troubling themselves about me. Charlie wanted to see me too, for he is rather in trouble. He has had idle companions at his tutor's, and they have led him into some foolish extravagance—nothing very great, but still enough to make both him and me uncomfortable. When John went to wish him 'good-b'ye,' it all came out; and John persuaded him to come and tell me about it. This has been his last brotherly act for Charlie, and a most important one; for if there had been concealment now, it would have led to untold evil, with a boy deficient in moral courage, as Charlie, unfortunately, is by nature. Now, having once been open with me, he will be likely to be so another time. The matter, though not pleasant, was, in a certain way, an assistance both to Agnes and to me, as giving us something to distract our thoughts; but poor Charlie was dreadfully distressed at having to add to our pain just at that time. He knows the position of affairs between John and Agnes—so far that he is told they are engaged, but cannot marry till John has established himself in India. This is sufficient for him and for the world. He was most thoughtful and tender towards his sister, and his feeling for John came out strongly. The night he arrived, of his own accord, he went off to bed early, to leave us more free. We sat up quite late, talking,—going over old days, our first meeting, and the Spanish journey. The mention of the German Baron recalled Boulogne, and though I did not allude to what had passed there in connection with him, John said simply, that there was no secret now. It was a case of assisting a person who shrank from acknowledging the assistance. Lady Chase had fallen into great poverty, and he had been able to help her a little; but she had died about six weeks ago.

It was another silent reproach to me for my suspicions, but John is too generous to have intended it as such.

He is not at all a person to say things with a meaning. He told me also, when referring to Mrs. Randolph, that Victor is growing up a fine boy, and likely to do well—which he certainly never could have done, humanly speaking, if he had been left to his mother's care. So we went on from one subject to another, till I am ashamed to say how late it was. But, as John said, he would have quite sufficient time for rest on his voyage, and would only be too thankful at first to be weary, that he might go to sleep and forget. And as for Agnes, she sat with her hand in his, drinking in all he said, and treasuring it up to be her solace when he is gone. I could not bear to part them; but I was obliged to do so at last, or my child would have been worn out. I heard John moving about overhead for more than an hour after I had gone to my room. Stillness is the one thing he seems to dread. In thinking over the conversation, it struck me that it had been surface-like and desultory; but we did not venture upon deeper subjects, or we should have broken down; and, after all, the little remarks which John lets out unconsciously, tell more of his real character than anything else could—he is so very transparent.

The next day was a mixture of bustle, and weariness, and oppressive heartache. I pray that it may never be my lot to pass such another. John had a few purchases to make, and we went out shopping, which took up part of the morning. Then we went back to the hotel, and dined early. In the afternoon we rowed out to the ship, which was lying at some little distance down the river. We all wanted to see John's cabin; and Agnes pleased herself with thinking that she could help to make it comfortable. She and Charlie were almost merry over their efforts at times; but every now and then I saw her glance at John with a wistful, tearful look of such longing love, that it went to my heart; and once, when we were for a

moment alone, she came up to me, as I was sitting on a sea-chest, and throwing herself on the floor, and hiding her face in my lap, murmured, ‘Mamma, darling, say a little prayer for me; I am so very unhappy.’ So the hours wore on, till it was growing late; and people were coming on board, and there was a most bewildering confusion with luggage, and a din of voices, mixed with shoutings and orderings, which was deafening. John had done all he could do in the way of arranging his cabin, and said he could go back with us, for the *Asia* would not sail till ten the next day. But just as we were getting into the boat, a sailor came up and told us that in all probability the hour would be much earlier—probably seven—and advised John to stay. He would not be persuaded, however—every moment was too precious; and we rowed back, very silent, very sad. We had tea, and then John came to me with one request, his last;—‘might Agnes read to him as she was accustomed to do when he was ill?’ So Charlie and I left them together; and through the door which opened into my bedroom, I heard the low sound of my darling’s voice, sweet and unfaltering, as she read what she told me afterwards was the fourteenth chapter of St. John’s Gospel; and then came a deeper tone, and I knew that they were joining in prayer. When the prayer was ended, there was a knock at my door. They had come together to wish me good night. Agnes held up her hand to me. There was a purple enamel ring on her finger. ‘*Ewigkeit*,’ she said, pointing to the gold letters engraved upon it. John took the little hand in both his, but he could not say anything; and as Agnes, timidly yet lovingly, looked up at him, waiting for his kiss, I gave them my blessing, and we separated.

We met at five the next morning for a hasty breakfast, and at six we were again on our way to the *Asia*, rowing down the broad, lake-like Southampton water,

looking at the trees, and houses, and churches, the boats and yachts by which we floated, but in thought seeing nothing save the loved faces which were so soon to be only visible in memory. The boat reached the huge vessel but too soon. Agnes was deadly pale, and John said but a very few words, and those uttered in a subdued tone. Then came a few minutes of confusion and hurry, for we were later than we ought to have been, and the Captain was impatient. Charlie and I handed up various packages, and placed ourselves so as to hide John and Agnes from view. But it was only prolonging the pain. Another impatient exclamation from the Captain startled John, and as I turned to hasten him, I just caught the words, 'My own for ever!' and giving Agnes one last, long kiss, he sprang up the ladder, and the boat pushed off.

At a little distance the men rested on their oars. We remained watching the vessel, and fancying we could distinguish John waving his handkerchief, whilst we waved ours in return; and in about twenty minutes afterwards the great ship was under weigh and moving slowly down the river, and John was really gone.

CHAPTER XLIX.

August 10: Arling.—Ina is to be married to-morrow. A whole volume of feelings, and incidents, and worries is contained in that fact.

I have been here for three weeks—very trying weeks; but I made up my mind to them beforehand. When I say I, I mean all of us, for Mrs. Penrhyn has invited the whole family. She is overflowing with hospitality, and has vouchsafed an amnesty for past offences, on condition of a humble acknowledgment of error, which she is always taking for granted, and which I really cannot trouble myself to repudiate. She said to me the other day, after a morning visit from Lady Worthington, who was rather stiff, ‘I was extremely sorry, my dear Mrs. Anstruther, that you should be made uncomfortable, and I have done all I could to make Lady Worthington think that you acted for the best; and though, no doubt, you may have been mistaken, yet if Ina should be happy with Mr. Anson, you will not have so much cause to reproach yourself as you may be inclined to fancy.’

Kind, comforting, sympathising Mrs. Penrhyn! She really throws quite a new light upon my conduct; and, what is even more satisfactory, she manages to make the world take her own view of it—so it must be the true one! I am a recognised penitent, and they are all so gentle and forbearing, so unwilling to allude to painful subjects (which yet are, somehow or other, always coming upon the *tapis*), that it is quite touching. I should be a re-

formed character, and never interfere in matrimonial affairs again, if only I were not so hard-hearted. But, as Mrs. Huddersfield observed last evening, when she had been entertaining me with the account of the magnificent jewels which are to be Lady Worthington's present to Miss Berkeley, her future daughter-in-law, 'You have the comfort of an impassive manner, my dear Mrs. Anstruther. I am afraid, in your place, I should not be able to avoid showing some regret; for, of course, Ina will be in a very inferior position to what she might have been.'

This tone of thought makes me sick at heart sometimes, I confess, and it is so different from what I have had lately; for ever since John's departure we have been living such a quiet life at Dernham, so out of the world, that I had almost forgotten that these misunderstandings and low, selfish, hard judgments were awaiting me. Agnes has kept up wonderfully; her mind seems strengthened and enlarged by the pressure put upon it; she has read more discursively, and thus she is beginning to be less narrow in her judgment, and more really charitable. She does not now merely pity and pray for all the persons who differ from her; but, whilst retaining her own opinions firmly, she tries to see what there is in their views which makes them believe themselves to be in the right. Her engagement has been of use to her. I am obliged to remind myself of this whenever the shadows of former doubts come across me, as they do, and I suppose always will do, at times.

Ina has been very sweet and pleasant, and I hope happy; though I should not have been so in her case; for Lady Anson has behaved very badly to her, and Henry has been alternately pained and provoked by little neglects and unkindnesses, and has shown his annoyance by irritability. Ina manages him admirably—

I must say that ; and all her little plans for the future show thought and kind-heartedness, and a wish to keep him up to his duties as a landlord, and to do the best she can herself for anyone in any way dependent upon her. I think she inherits somewhat of her grandmother's generosity in money matters, and it is shown in the same kind of way. She will devote herself to any person or thing that will lean upon her, but she cannot interest herself in independence. She has been most soothing and sympathising with Agnes, thinking her unhappy ; and Agnes, who expands under affection as a blossom under the sun, has been much brighter in consequence, and has thrown herself into Ina's preparations for her marriage, and made Essie do the same ; and so we have been really a very harmonious household ; only disturbed by the fact that Charlie has failed in his first Indian examination. This has been a greater disappointment to him than to me, for I was sure he could not have worked hard enough to pass, or he would not have got himself into those financial difficulties with his idle friends. He has another opportunity left, and I hope this failure may be a warning to him. He is always saying that if he had lived with John Penrhyn it would have been different, and I believe he is right ; but I must not allow myself to regret what could not well have been otherwise.

Ina, Agnes, Essie, and I came here, as I said, about three weeks ago. Charlie and Hugh came the day before yesterday. Charlotte Anson arrived on the same day. Marietta and Mr. Neville are here with little Cissy, and Frank Neville is expected this evening. In fact, every relation, whether near or distant, that could be thought of seems to have been invited, though, fortunately, only a few have accepted the invitation. My thoughts turn continually from the mirth and excitement to John Penrhyn, just landing in India alone, with his heart in

England. But I hope it may not be as bad for him as we expect. He is to go to the house of Mr. George Digby at Bombay ; so that he will not be friendless ; and there will be the excitement of novelty, and the interest of beginning his new career. We shall look most anxiously for the next mail, which is nearly certain to bring us letters. Agnes is keeping a journal for him of all the little details. She says it is like talking to him, and is her greatest comfort. Essie, naturally enough, is the merriest, and, I might almost say, the happiest of us all. Mrs. Penrhyn has taken a great fancy to her, and is always calling her 'Sunbeam'—a fashion which sometimes has the effect of clouding the sunbeam for a few moments, as Essie creeps up to my side afterwards, and says, 'Mamma, I wish Mrs. Penrhyn would call me by my own name. She is not my grandmamma, and I don't think she has a right to give me nicknames.' Nevertheless, Essie is a sunbeam, and we all feel it, though we don't think it necessary to draw her own attention to the fact. I forgot to mention, amongst the list of arrivals, Mr. L'Estrange and Captain Shaw. The old Captain is a friend both of the Penrhyns and Ansons ; and having been mainly instrumental in removing the obstacles to the marriage, it was only right that he should be invited. I did not think, however, that he would have come—he is so very infirm—but it seems he had set his mind upon it. He is a great admirer of Ina's beauty ; though his heart, as he confides to me, is given to Agnes, who waits upon him in the prettiest, most dutiful manner possible. They were sitting together nearly the whole of this evening whilst the music was going on, thoroughly enjoying it, and Agnes amusing him at intervals by telling him who everyone was. The Rector arrived quite late. He is to assist in the service to-morrow, at Ina's special request. And though I suspect he still shrinks from being

brought into immediate contact with Marietta, yet he was, I am sure, pleased to be invited; and Mrs. Penrhyn was very gracious, and Mrs. Huddersfield quite considerate for him. The latter has some sympathy, I suspect, with his awkwardness in society, from having seen so much of it in her son Geoffrey, who is as strange as ever. The two girls are what some people would call handsome, but what I am inclined to call showy. They have bright complexions and good eyes, but rather large features—and they are so noisy! that is the trying thing about them. One can hear their voices directly they enter the house, wherever one may be. They set up for being fashionable, according to the fashion of the day, which includes, in their estimation, manly jackets, with pockets for ungloved hands; and such slang! If they were not, as they are, very good-natured, they would be simply unendurable. Ina smiles down upon them from the serene heights of her own graceful beauty; Agnes shrinks from them; Essie laughs, and wonders at them; and I pity them, for they are living in a total mistake, even as regards their own object. They want, above all things, to be married; but they are making themselves thoroughly distasteful to all persons whom it would be desirable they should marry. No man of real good taste—and, I might almost say, no right-minded man—would put up with such noisy vulgarity in externals; and very few are likely to give themselves the trouble to look beneath.

Bessie Penrhyn laments it grievously, and is always trying to make me think the best of them, telling me how good the girls are to the poor, and how much trouble they take in the schools; and assuring me that they read a great deal, and are most useful in housekeeping. And I hear it all, and quite believe it, and do my very best to like them; but no sooner have I advanced a little way than I receive a shock from some offensive piece of slang,

or open endeavour to attract attention, and grow chilled again. If I could have them to myself, I think I might possibly do something to soften them, for they seem to take kindly to me, and to be inclined to listen to my opinion; but what can be done when their mother worships them, and their grandmother is always saying how clever and superior they are?

This day has been as the day preceding a wedding always is—a continual rushing after something which has been forgotten, or is likely to be forgotten. The London dressmaker has been in time, but some village people who had work to do have been most provoking, and Essie, taking little Cissy with her, has been running backwards and forwards half the day with messages; whilst Marietta and I have been in Ina's room superintending packing, and trying to make some alterations in the very fashionable white silk bonnet which Ina is to wear when she goes away, and which is so overgrown with flowers that it would do for a horticultural fête. One thing in which Ina and I quite agree is a detestation of flower gardens on the top of the head; indeed, Ina's taste in dress is always very quiet, and she has stood out bravely against her grandmother's endeavours to provide her with gorgeous garments for the gaities which certainly are not likely to take place at Dernham. I kept out of the way of the arrivals at first, but when Captain Shaw came I was obliged to go downstairs, and then I was presented to various cousins in different degrees of affinity, and obliged to submit to Mrs. Penrhyn's patronising introduction; and to hear continually that 'I had been so very good and kind in my care of Ina, and that now I was to be rewarded by seeing her happy.' And then poor Henry Anson was brought forward, very shy and uncomfortable, and made to listen to a flattering speech, which also had a sting in it. For it concluded with regrets 'that Lady

Anson and her dear girls could not be present on this joyful occasion; though no doubt it was better in many ways that they should be spared what might have been too overpowering for them.' Henry rushed off to Mr. Neville as soon as he could, and I saw them walking in the garden together. I retreated to my room, and had a half-hour of solitude and rest. It was very soothing to the body; but still more so to the mind was a short conversation which I had just now with Ina before she went to bed. She came to my room to wish me 'good night,' for I had left the drawing-room before her. Agnes and Essie were with me. They were both very merry, amusing themselves by repeating to me some of the little incidents of the evening, and especially Hugh's endeavours to keep clear of Mrs. Penrhyn, and avoid being introduced to all her relations as 'this dear boy who has set his heart upon being Lord Chancellor.' There was a pause when Ina appeared, for of course she looks upon her grandmother with very different eyes from ours: indeed, I often reproach myself for allowing the other children to express their opinion of Mrs. Penrhyn so freely. The only thing I feel is, that they will talk to each other if they don't talk to me; and that, by hearing what they have to say, I can manage now and then to check prejudice.

The two girls prepared to go when Ina came in. Essie, indeed, would have stayed, but Agnes, with that thoughtfulness in little matters which never forsakes her, said, 'No, Essie, you must come. Ina must have the last night with mamma alone.' And so they hurried away, though not before Agnes had whispered, 'Mamma, I looked in the *Times* this evening, and saw that the Marseilles mail was in, so we must have a letter soon.'

Dear child! her face was radiant with hope as she spoke. I do not think she yet realises what the separation may be, but believes that by next year all will be right,

and John will have been able to establish himself in his profession.

Ina looked grave and tired. I told her she must not stay with me, or she would be ill. But she answered, 'no, it would do her good to have a few minutes' quiet; the day had been so fatiguing; and she had been talking to Henry, and now she must come and talk to me.'

'I don't quite see the connection of ideas, my love,' I replied. 'I don't see why conversation with him should involve conversation with me.'

'But it does, mamma'—and she knelt down by me and looked up in my face anxiously and sadly—'because we both want to say that we think we have not done all we should do, and we shall be so much happier if you will tell us you forgive us, and then we shall begin afresh.'

'If you did wrong, darling,' I said, 'you have suffered for it, and you know that I am the last person to treasure up such remembrances; so, if that is all, the offences shall be quite bygones, and you shall be happy again:' and I kissed her tenderly.

'I don't know that that is quite possible,' said Ina; 'things are so awkward. Henry has been saying all day that if only one of his sisters could have been present it would not have signified; and they could have been if they had wished it. It seems so very unkind, and he takes it so very much to heart. Charlotte Anson and I have been trying to reconcile him to it, but it is very difficult to do that. When he does not like a thing he is always reverting to it; and one has to go over the ground again. I said to him at last that perhaps we ought not to complain, because we had partly brought it upon ourselves; and that led to rather a long talk, and it was then we agreed to find you out and say to you what was in our minds, as to not having been quite open from the beginning. But you were engaged at the time with Captain Shaw, and

afterwards there was no opportunity. Only now I may tell Henry that you don't think anything more about it; may I not? He is waiting outside to wish you "good night."

'I could scarcely help smiling, it was so like a child, not having any great depth of feeling, but conscious of something being amiss, and coming for forgiveness; but that is just what Henry Anson is—a good-natured, amiable boy. I went out to him, and he asked me hurriedly if Ina had explained, and if I understood. Of course I gave him a very hearty grasp of the hand and a free pardon; and he went off happy. And then Ina followed me into my room again, and we had some more conversation of a graver kind. She is nervous and anxious now, seeing more fully the greatness of the duties she is about to take upon herself, and I think she is beginning to feel that she will have to carry them out in a certain sense alone.

'I do wish to live a higher life than people generally do,' she said; 'but Henry dreads anything which he calls unusual, and that will be my difficulty. If I can only keep him up!'

I sighed inwardly: it was a good and right wish, but it should not have been uttered by a young girl on the eve of her marriage. Yet it cheered me to feel that Ina was alive to the need of this higher life, and we spoke more fully of it. I was obliged to recognise the fact that hers would be the leading mind—I could have given her no advice that would have been of any use if I had not; but it created an awkwardness. 'Almost everything in this case,' I said, 'depends on beginning at once—setting your life on a right footing at first starting. Your temptation, Ina, will be self-indulgence, and so, I think,' I added, with some hesitation, 'it may be Henry's.'

'Oh yes, undoubtedly: we both dearly love ease.'

'Well, then, it is the enemy to be fought against: but

as you will have to persuade your husband to fight as well as yourself, it will not do to be too energetic, or you may frighten him. Early rising, if I may judge from experience, will not be a choice with either of you.'

Ina laughed, for late hours and unpunctuality have been a cause of vexation from her childhood. 'I don't think,' she said, 'that Henry will stand an eight o'clock breakfast.'

'Probably not; but family prayers at nine, punctually;—what do you say to that? with a little time before devoted to grave reading. Don't you think you could persuade him to try?'

'Oh yes, he will do anything I like; but I should feel more virtuous if we breakfasted at half-past eight.'

'And your husband would feel more cross. It has not been the Manor custom.'

'No; they never breakfasted till nearly half-past nine; but then they so often had people staying with them.'

'And so will you have, and you must prepare for it. It is far better to have a later hour which does not alter, than an early hour when you are alone, and a late one when you have friends in the house.'

'Henry wishes to be very quiet,' said Ina; 'so I don't think we shall see much society.'

'Yes, my dear, you will, in a small way, which is almost as disturbing as a large one. A country house necessarily collects people, and the Anson tradition is hospitality.'

'Then I shall do nothing regularly,' said Ina; 'Lady Anson and the girls never did. They were always running about after their guests when they had any, and when they had not they were so out of the habit of sensible occupation, that they did not know how to set about it. At least, this is Charlotte Anson's account of them.'

So the best thing to be done is to create for yourself

some prior claim, at least for the morning. The Rector, I know, will want you to look after the school a little. Try how it will be to go there at a fixed hour,—say on a Monday morning; and just make your excuses to your guests, and leave them to amuse themselves. They will all be grateful to you. Nothing makes people feel comfortable and at home like seeing that the lady of the house does not make company of them. I mention the school merely as an illustration of a principle. Country life is dissipation or not, just as people make it. Let your friends know that you and your husband have certain occupations for the morning which cannot be put aside, and they will accept the fact quite naturally; and then you can go your own way, or rather your husband's way,—for the more you can join yourself to him in everything, of course the better.'

'Henry is very kind to the poor,' said Ina.

'Yes, I know he is; and you can keep him up to it by bringing particular cases before him which will interest him. Perhaps you will be able to fix a certain time when he may see any of the poor people who may have requests or complaints to make. If you are with him he will not find it tiresome.'

'But there is all the hunting and shooting in the autumn,' said Ina; 'that is what makes me despair of any regularity.'

'Make up your mind to it, my love; don't fight against it. Let it be your husband's holiday time of the year, and work so much harder at other times.'

'It lasts so long,' sighed Ina.

'So it does, I grant; but Henry is not one of those men who live for nothing else. Give him an interest in nobler things, and then he will take the hunting and shooting moderately. I am sure the great thing for both of you is to feel yourselves necessary to the people about

you. I don't believe any persons can live a really happy life who can go away from home whenever they feel the inclination, and know that they will not be missed. It is irksome occasionally to be tied down by the claims of schools and poor people, and such self-imposed duties; but it is misery to be without them.'

'If I were like Marietta it would be different,' sighed Ina. 'All these things come easily to her, and Mr. Neville likes them, but——'

'They are essential for the higher life of which you spoke just now, my dear child. After all, that is the end and object of these duties, as regards oneself. They are means to an end.'

'It is the fashion to consider them important in themselves,' said Ina; 'and sometimes I confess I grow weary when I hear people making such a fuss about them.'

'Fashion is right in a certain sense,' was my reply. 'It is no doubt infinitely important to a starving child to be fed, and to an ignorant child to be taught; and important for society also, since, without feeding and teaching, the next generation would either die, or be pests and outcasts. But, as regards the persons who undertake the feeding and teaching, the only question of consequence is, in what spirit they are acting,—whether from the love of occupation, or mere benevolence, or the desire to work for Christ,—for His ends—to take part in the great struggle of the universe between good and evil, looking forward to the victory and the rest hereafter? I know no high or noble life except this,' I added. 'I cannot understand any other. All objects short of it are, to me, petty, because they are transitory. The one great reality, death, must be their tombstone and their destruction.'

'It is so strange,' observed Ina, thoughtfully, 'to think of death to-night, when life seems only beginning.'

'Yes,' I said, 'and with some persons I should have

felt it almost cruel to speak of it at such a moment ; but I am not afraid with you, my child, for we have looked upon death together, and the memory of it is bright, and very precious to us.'

'Cecil would have been more to you far than I have been,' said Ina. 'It often makes me very unhappy and self-reproachful to think so.'

'She might have been in some ways, not in others,' I said. 'We each have a place which none other can fill. But you may be, and you will be, a greater comfort to me now, Ina, than you have ever been able to be before. You can scarcely tell the interest which I shall feel in having you at the Manor.'

'If I go right,' she answered, with a half smile. 'But, mamma, I am afraid things never can be smooth whilst Lady Anson is so set against me.'

It was a fear which I would fain have set aside, but I was unable to do so ; it was echoed too truly by my own misgivings.

'She is to me cold, hard, unlike herself,' continued Ina. 'Yet she idolises Henry ; and now that she treats him so affectionately, he has forgotten everything that was amiss before. Mamma'—and tears started to her eyes—'if anything can ever make Henry change in his love for me, it will be his mother. And yet to everyone else she is so gentle and kind. What can I do to bring her round ?'

'Pray ; and be gentle and unselfish, and keep yourself in the background : that is all I can say, darling. Above all, don't fret your husband by any jealousy of his family. Give him sympathy and interest, and do not recognise the coldness. Don't suppose that his mother and sisters can be anything but kind to you. The enmity which is unrecognised will sometimes dié for want of fuel to feed the flame. But it is, and will be, a trial.'

'And brought upon me by myself,' said Ina—and her

voice was very sorrowful. In answer, I could but kiss her, and pray God to bless and guide her, and convert her trials into means of blessing. And then, at length, she left me, and I knelt to repeat the prayer even more fervently, as I committed her to God's Hands; for I felt that the path she had marked out for herself was one in which she would find much roughness and many stumbling-blocks.

CHAPTER L.

August 11.—A day—as regarded the weather—of unclouded sunshine, and when I looked out of my window, at five o'clock this morning, over the lawn, glittering with dew, and bright with flowers, to the Worthington woods, misty with soft grey vapour, and then gazed into the depths of the blue sky, I felt cheered and hopeful. Earth and Heaven alike were radiant in beauty, prepared, as it seemed, to welcome Ina on her wedding morning. I was thankful to have those early moments to myself, for I knew how soon the bustle of the day must begin. Agnes and Essie came into my room before I was quite dressed, and asked if there would be time to read with me; and, to my pleasure and surprise, Ina followed them. It was her last morning, she said, and it would be a great comfort to her. She could not fix her thoughts in her own room, and she was in a fidget lest some one should interrupt her. So we sat down, and read together as usual. Ina's voice was a little tremulous, but she showed no other sign of agitation. The three lingered together for a few minutes afterwards. They seemed to cling to each other very much, Ina and Agnes especially. Agnes, indeed, seemed even more nervous than her sister. Life is always to her so very earnest. It was a relief to hear Essie's merry laugh, as she reminded them that, after all, they were going to live within a mile of each other, and might meet every day. I saw that Agnes' thoughts wandered on into the future then, for she made no direct answer; but when Ina and Essie were gone, she said,

‘Mamma, I wish John had known this was to be the wedding-day. What do you think he is doing now?’

‘Trying to find a Bombay home,’ I said, ‘and thinking how pleasant it will be to have a dear little wife in it.’

‘Ah, mamma! it seems a long way off, and it will be terribly far from you. Ina ought to be very happy.’

‘I hope she is.’

‘And you think she is?’

‘She has a great deal to make her so.’

Agnes turned round quickly. ‘Mamma, you must speak more heartily when I am married. I could not bear you to have a shadow of doubt about me. And are you quite sure I shall not do wrong? The thought will come still.’

‘I am quite sure, my darling, that you may safely accept the Rector’s decision,’ I said. ‘And if I spoke doubtfully about Ina, it was merely because marriage is earthly; and there must be a doubt about all things earthly.’

‘But there will be none when John and I are together in Heaven,’ she answered; ‘and we shall be there some day, perhaps soon—who knows?’

She said it simply and easily, but in a kind of abstracted tone, and as if something had crossed her mind which carried her far away from the present.

Just then there was a knock at the door. Griffiths, Mrs. Penrhyn’s maid, wished to know if I had some small black hair-pins which I could give Miss Anstruther.

They were given; and I was telling Agnes she must go, and leave me to finish dressing, when Griffiths appeared again. ‘Mrs. Penrhyn and Mrs. Huddersfield were assisting to dress Miss Anstruther, and Miss Penrhyn would be so very much obliged if I would go down to her, as she wished to ask my opinion about placing another table in the dining-room.’

I started. Was Ina to be so entirely taken out of my

hands? I was upon the very point of going to her, for I had taken it as a matter of course that I should superintend her toilette, though I knew that Griffiths was to be the actual lady's-maid.

'Did Miss Anstruther ask for her grandmamma?' I inquired of Griffiths.

'Oh no, ma'am. Miss Anstruther did not like to trouble Mrs. Penrhyn, and Mrs. Huddersfield came first to help me; but Mrs. Penrhyn said she could not be satisfied without being there too. Mrs. Penrhyn has such beautiful taste, ma'am; and Miss Anstruther will be sure to look lovely. We are not quite decided about the brooch, that is the chief difficulty—whether it should be the pearl and emerald one which Mr. Anson gave, or the diamond—you know, ma'am—which belonged to Miss Anstruther's poor mamma.'

I had a pang of self-reproach. That memory was one which I had fully hoped and intended to bring before Ina at this time; but at Arling it had always been made so antagonistic to me, that it had seemed almost impossible to allude to it.

'Miss Anstruther is to be married with her mamma's wedding-ring. I suppose, ma'am, you know that,' continued Griffiths, confidentially.

I knew nothing, but I could not bring myself to say so; and I merely remarked, that I hoped it would fit her, and then I added, that I would go to Miss Penrhyn as soon as I possibly could; and Griffiths was sent away.

I found Bessie full of business; doing all the little necessary things which, on these occasions, no one thinks about, because they are so small, but without which the day's ceremonial is certain to go quite wrong.

I tried to throw myself into the work; and Bessie, in her straightforward unselfishness, was an excellent aid and example in the duty of taking the second part: but I confess that my thoughts were much more in Ina's dressing-

room than in the dining-room; and I would not at all answer for the advice I was called upon to give about the placing of flower-vases and the arranging of chain. When the prayer bell rang, as usual, a message was sent down to beg that Miss Penrhyn would read prayers, accompanied by a request from Mrs. Huddersfield that I would pour out the coffee, as she could not leave Miss Anstruther. And after prayers came another message, begging that no one would go to Miss Anstruther till Mrs. Penrhyn came down, which was evidently a polite way of suggesting that I was not to intrude.

I am ashamed to think how trying it all was, considering that the matter was such a small one. Only Agnes understood how fretted I felt. She came and sat by me at breakfast, and, in her sweet gentle way, said just a few words, which told me she understood, and then made room for Captain Shaw by my side, and placed the Rector opposite; and having thus settled me amongst friends, exerted herself to take any little trouble off my hands; whilst Essie ran about, waiting upon everyone, and making herself very merry with Celia and Stacey Huddersfield, and the four other young bridesmaids, not belonging to the family, who arrived last night. Mr. Neville and Marietta appeared late. Marietta had slept badly. She came up to me, and wondered to see me there; but she understood my look in answer, and made no comments. It was a small straggling party—one person after another coming down; some of the bridesmaids dressed for the service, some not. The gentlemen were in perplexity as to where they were to go, and what they were to do. Henry Anson did not appear. Mr. Neville is always silent when others are talkative. Mr. Huddersfield sat aloof in a fit of abstraction. Geoffrey was ordered about by his sisters, and made blunders, and was helped out of them by Charlie and Hugh. The young people were all very happy, apparently, but they wanted a head,—for *Rector Penrhyn*

can never take any authority upon herself, though she is eminently useful ; and it was not my place. I wished it had been ; for I should certainly have kept Stacey and Celia more quiet, and should have stopped the flirtation of the pretty young bridesmaids and two or three boys who were apeing manhood.

I don't like wedding mornings—I never did like them ; and to-day's was the worst I have known in some respects. But, then, I was cross, and wished myself at home at Dernham. Oh, how different it should all have been !

When breakfast was over, I sent Agnes and Essie away to put on their bridesmaids' dresses—for they were amongst the number who had delayed doing so. And then the gentlemen strayed into the library, and looked at the morning papers, and the ladies dispersed to their own rooms, and the boys went off into the garden. Marietta followed me into the drawing-room, which was empty. She threw herself into an arm-chair, and exclaimed—

‘ So you are kept out of Ina's room ! It is really too bad ! ’

‘ It is only what I could have expected,’ I said ; ‘ and, after all, I suppose one is bound to remember that Mrs. Penrhyn is the grandmother. But it is a piece of petty tyranny, I must confess. I would not have cared for the superintendence, if she would have allowed me to go near Ina.’

‘ It makes me very angry,’ said Marietta.

‘ Yes,’ I replied—‘ false relations ! There is the evil. They can't always be avoided ; but where they exist, I am convinced there is nothing to be done but to accept and bear them. You can't reset them ; and they will, in a great measure, be over now : ’ and I sighed.

Marietta came up to me as I was standing by the window, and, putting her arm round me, kissed me.

‘ It seems very hard that you, who have lived for

others, should have all these contradictions and worries,' she said.

'No,' I replied, 'it is not hard. It is all in the way of discipline, and the worry is only temporary. I shall forget it all when I am back again at Dernham.'

'No,' said Marietta, 'begging your pardon, you won't forget it. You will never think of Ina's wedding-day without remembering that you were kept away from her.'

'Possibly: but it will become a matter of interest to me by-and-by — a specimen of Mrs. Penrhyn's character. Half one's amusing memories are made up of small unpleasantnesses; and life in retrospect would be unutterably dull if there were no shadows to bring out the lights. Besides, it helps one to bear a good deal, when one thinks how one shall look back upon it.'

'You are more philosophical than I am,' observed Marietta.

'I can be philosophical about the small things,' I said: 'it is the great ones which trouble me. If I thought that Ina was going to marry a man who would raise her, I could be actually amused at Mrs. Penrhyn's incivilities. But that is the point, Marietta.'

'Yes'—and Marietta paused, and added, 'And does she love him?'

'I doubt whether she could love anyone more,' was my reply.

'Ah, that is it!' exclaimed Marietta. 'The capacity of loving—it differs. I thought Ina had a great capacity, but that was when first I knew her. Dear friend, it is a disappointing world.'

'And you have at last discovered that?' I answered, laughing. 'I advise you to write a letter to the *Times*, and give notice of it.'

'I don't think you are disappointing,' she said, tenderly.

I turned away, for I felt tears rush to my eyes. If there was one thing more than another which at that moment I felt, it was that I was a disappointment to myself. What I had meant to do, and what I had really done—what a contrast was presented by the thoughts!

But that was not a time for such meditations. Marietta and I were soon interrupted. Henry Anson came in, looking frightened and out of place—as most men do on their wedding-day. The Rector followed. After him appeared Captain Shaw, Mr. Neville—in short, the whole party, and no one knowing what to do. I could not help thinking what a curious coincidence it was that Henry Anson, and Marietta, and Mr. L'Estrange, should be brought together on this occasion; and I wondered whether memory travelled back with them, as it did with me. Standing there, and thinking of bygone days, had a strange, painful interest—it was like a story; and it made me feel how hollow the ground of the present too often is,—what depths and gulfs of bitterness and sorrow there are in every life, which are only bridged over, and into which, however firm may be one's actual footing, one can scarcely trust oneself to look.

Henry Anson had a little box in his hand, which contained a pearl ring, that his sister Edith had sent Ina. He made a great deal of it, and said Ina must make a point of wearing it; but I felt myself it was a present which ought to have been sent before, and which was not worthy either of the donor or the receiver. Lady Anson has done just what was required in this way, but nothing more. The Rector asked about John Penrhyn,—whether I had heard of his arrival in India; and this brought on a general discussion about the possibilities of the voyage, not at all appropriate or in place; but I think we were all glad of something to talk about—I know I was; for my vexation at being kept away from Ina pressed less upon my

mind; and I am quite sure it was a godsend to Henry Anson, whose nervousness was increasing painfully. He is always nervous, more or less; and now he twitched his mouth, and pulled at the buttons of his coat, till it was quite distressing to look at him.

After about half an hour of this *far niente*—which I suspect was not *dolce* to anyone—we all looked at the clock, and thought that time was going on, and it would be well to inquire how affairs were progressing upstairs. I felt I had done my duty—perhaps something more—in assisting to entertain Mrs. Penrhyn's guests, and I was glad to escape. Marietta came with me, and we went to Agnes' room to see if she and Essie were ready, but they were not quite; and the door was bolted, and we were not admitted. I don't know what kind of feeling came over me then—irritation, and disappointment, and fretfulness. I felt as if I had nothing to do—no place to go to—as if I was thrust out of everything. It was childish—wrong, and only momentary; but if Mrs. Penrhyn desired to put me out of humour on Ina's wedding-day, she had certainly gone to work most successfully. I told Agnes and Essie to come to me when they were dressed, and went to my own room. Marietta ran downstairs to Mr. Neville. The bustle of arrangement was beginning now. Everyone was rushing about to find everyone, and asking questions which no one could answer. The passage by my room was like the road to a railway station, and Stacey and Celia Huddersfield's voices were heard above all others. I felt as if I ought to go out and make myself useful; but no one had told me what was to be done, except that I was to go in the carriage with Mr. Huddersfield, who was to give Ina away; and I was afraid that if I attempted to interfere in any degree I might only make 'confusion worse confounded;' so, as there was a quarter of an hour to spare, I thought I would make use of it in

trying to get myself into a more quiet and Christian frame of mind.

I had just settled myself to a meditation upon my own and other persons' infirmities, when I heard the murmur of voices in the corridor ; then followed a gentle tap at the door, and Ina—looking, oh, so lovely !—entered, in her bridal dress of white silk, with a veil, fastened by a wreath of orange flowers, thrown over her head. Her face was flushed, her eyes—usually too quiet in their expression—showed a depth of feeling which she was struggling to keep down; and a smile, which yet had something in it that was nearly akin to sorrow, played upon her beautiful mouth.

The door was scarcely closed, when she exclaimed, 'Mamma, dearest, it has not been my doing. I thought, of course, you would come to me ; but I could say nothing. Tell me now, is it right?—is it all just as you wish? I would rather you should like it than anyone else, except Harry. And kiss me, darling mamma ; I want your kiss and your blessing.'

The cloud vanished in a moment. Did I not kiss and bless her, and tell her that only the love of her own mother could be greater than mine? Did I not look at her with pride, and feel as if life must be happy and good for one on whom God had bestowed such precious outward gifts? At that instant I do not think I had a single misgiving. And again she said, 'Mamma, your approval is the one thing I crave for—your love is the best ; you have done all for me. I have been ungrateful ; I have given you such pain. But oh! indeed, I love you dearly ; dearly!'—and tears were in her eyes, which I wiped away, as I playfully scolded her, and told her we should both get into disgrace. And then Mrs. Penrhyn summoned her, and Bessie called for me, and hurried me so, that I had not even time to inquire about Agnes and Essie. I don't

know quite what happened—what we all did and said, or how we were placed, or what arrangements were made, —till I found myself seated in church, looking at Ina as she knelt by Henry Anson's side at the altar, and feeling that, whatever might be my position in the eyes of the world, I had gained a place in my child's heart, which was the only earthly reward I had ventured to covet.

It is a very awful service. I know no words which thrill through me like that solemn adjuration, by 'the dreadful day of judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed.' With those who have taken part in forwarding or consenting to a marriage, there must always, on hearing it, be a moment of retrospection and self-questioning.

I thank God that my conscience was free; still more did I thank Him that Ina and Henry were free also. Whatever had been their shortcomings, there was now no obstacle to their union.

Just at that instant my eye fell upon Agnes; she was standing close behind her sister, and in front of the other bridesmaids, her face turned, so that I could see her profile. Her eyes were fixed on a little side window, through which was visible a strip of deep blue sky, and her hands were clasped tightly over the flowers which she held. I could just catch the flush on her cheek, and the compression of the lips, which I knew so well betokened an inward struggle.

Did the question strike her as it did me? I dared not think. Simple, true, innocent (at least in aim), as I knew her to be, I felt that when she should stand in Ina's place, there might be a doubt which, to a mind like hers, would be suffering. A pang shot through me. Almost I could have wished that she might be spared it.

But the service continued. Henry and Ina were pronounced man and wife, and we knelt to ask for God's

blessing on them. Then came the short exhortation, the earnest private prayer—and it was all over. Ina turned to me, and mine was her first kiss. I hope I was not triumphant, but I certainly was happy.

The crowd of gazers poured out of the church. The village children ranged themselves on each side of the path with flowers. There was the usual delay in the vestry, whilst the business of giving signatures and certificates was carried on. Mr. Neville and Marietta were lingering near the church porch. Some discussion about the order of return was going on. Mr. Neville left Marietta, and went out into the road; he did not come back, and Marietta went after him. She also did not return. Hugh, who was with me, ran out to inquire the reason, and brought back word that they were walking home together, without waiting for anyone else. The servants said Mr. Neville had received a telegraphic despatch. If so, he has kept the contents to himself. Yet I think they must have been unpleasant, for he has been looking strangely unlike himself since. I have not, however, had time to speak to him or to Marietta. We hurried back for the breakfast, and the ceremony of speeches, and compliments, and cake-cutting—which needs no record. Lady Worthington was not present. I should have been surprised if she had been; but Mrs. Penrhyn expects her and one or two of the young people in the evening. My dear child looked very happy, and very graceful and pretty; and Henry Anson was like a boy set free for a holiday—so full of spirits, and so much more up to what was required of him than he had been before. He made a short speech, in which he alluded to his mother's absence, and offered a kind of excuse for it. Bessie, who happened to be near me, whispered to me that this was Mrs. Penrhyn's doings: she had been afraid lest people should talk! My health was drunk, and I was going to ask Mr.

Neville to return thanks for me; but he was looking so ill that I did not like to trouble him; and whilst I was hesitating what to do, dear old Captain Shaw volunteered. He said—what I should be ashamed to note down; but it was the outpouring of a good deal of pent-up feeling, which, as he stated himself, had been gathering for years; and when Ina smiled to me across the table, and murmured ‘that I deserved all, and more than all—that no love or gratitude could ever repay me for the blessing I had been to her’—I am afraid I was very weak, and tears came so fast that I wished myself in my own room. It was a comfort to slip away when Ina went to change her dress for her journey. We were both of us very thankful for the few minutes together; and Agnes and Essie came in to help their sister, and Charlie and Hugh afterwards begged to be admitted; so that we had quite a little home party. It was a rush at the last—for the carriage was late, and there was a fear of missing the train. After my farewell to Ina, I had only time to give Henry a mother’s kiss, and tell him to take care of my child, and bring her back safely to Dernham; and then Mrs. Penrhyn took possession of them both, and forbade any more good-b’yes, and the carriage drove off with them, and—the world became blank.

11 o’clock P.M.—I have stolen away from the dancers. They are a very joyous party. Lady Worthington has brought two of her girls, which puts Mrs. Penrhyn into high good-humour. Charlie and Hugh are among the merriest of the merry. Essie, too, is as gleeful as a little fairy. Agnes has danced a quadrille with an awkward boy whom everyone else avoided: I left her talking brightly to Captain Shaw. The Rector looks on as if in a dream. He took charge of Cissy till she was sent to bed; and now his eye seems to wander in search of her. Marietta, with her inimitable tact, is assisting

Bessie Penrhyn in the most unobtrusive way to make everyone comfortable, but she will not dance, and she is strangely pale. Mrs. Penrhyn sits in the great chair at the top of the room, and looks—what she is—the presiding sovereign. Lady Worthington, by her side, is very gracious, and kindly oblivious of the past. Mr. Neville has not been seen since the six o'clock dinner; except—I did catch a glimpse of him once, as he was crossing the hall to go upstairs; he lingered for a moment in the doorway of the dining-room, and was nearly knocked down by Hugh and Celia Huddersfield, as, rushing through a country dance, they came out into the hall. A more ghastly face I never saw. What can it be?

Midnight.—John Penrhyn is dead! O, merciful God! have pity on my darling!

CHAPTER LI.

August 14: Dernham Cottage.—Yes, I must write, though it is agony to recall the past. I cannot, will not forget what my child has been in this her hour of trial. Mr. Neville and Marietta came to me with the tidings. They missed me from the dancing-room; and Mr. Neville, who had observed my watchfulness of him, thought I suspected something amiss. He had made up his mind to tell me that night. It was wise. Night is the best time for a shock. The illness—fever—was very rapid, only three days. John had landed rather more than a week, and was staying with Mr. George Digby, who sent the telegram to an agent in London, to be forwarded to Mr. Neville. This is all we know. Are telegrams really blessings? We consulted what should be done. Should Agnes be told that night? I said, ‘yes;’ she would see I was troubled; I could not keep it from her. Marietta went downstairs to make an excuse for my non-appearance. It was an hour of awful waiting till the carriages drove off. The party was not late—all were gone by one o’clock; then Agnes and Essie came up to me. I kept my face from the light, and said the truth—that I could not bear it, my head ached so much. They wanted to help me undress. I said I would keep Agnes. Essie demurred: I could not persuade her to go for some seconds—they seemed hours. She said I must be very ill, my voice was so strange; but she went, and then I turned round and looked at Agnes. I could not speak, my voice was

choked. She gazed at me, terrified. The telegram was lying on the table by my side. I touched it, intending to remove it. Thinking that I pointed to it, meaning her to read it, she took it up,—and there was a low moan, a long gasp, and she fell to the ground senseless.

I rang my bell, and sent for Marietta. We laid our darling on the sofa; but though, after a time, she opened her eyes, she did not seem to know us. We undressed her, and I put her into my bed, and she lay very still, only moaning a little occasionally; and I watched by her, and sent Marietta away. Towards morning I rested myself on the sofa, and slept for about an hour; and almost as soon as it was daylight Marietta came to me again, and I arranged that a carriage should be ordered to take us at twelve o'clock to the railway station. Ill or well, it was better we should be at home.

Before nine the tidings were known by everyone, and Mrs. Penrhyn and Bessie were both with me; Mrs. Penrhyn so really kind and considerate, that I forgot I had ever found her the reverse; and Bessie full of the most loving sympathy; but no one could do anything for me, except help me to prepare for departure. Agnes was still apparently unconscious of what was going on, but she suffered me to dress her, and took a cup of coffee which Bessie brought her. Her hands were cold as a stone, and her face was more than pale—it had the ashy whiteness of a corpse—and there was a fixed stare in the eyes which frightened me. If she could only have shed tears I should have been so relieved, but she did nothing but shudder and moan; only once I heard words which pierced me like a dagger—‘If I had been his wife—if I had only been his wife, I might have been with him!’ The other children came round her sorrowfully. Essie cried as if her heart would break, and Hugh, with a look of awe, stole up to me and asked, did I think

that Agnes would die? But I did not think that. I felt that her trial was to be life, not death. I prayed only that it might not be death in life.

Mr. L'Estrange asked to see me directly after breakfast. He said he should go home with us. I don't know who had proposed or arranged it. It appeared so natural and right, that when I thanked him, and said it would be a comfort, he looked quite surprised. I took him upstairs to see Agnes, hoping it might rouse her; and she just so far recognised him that she said, 'Pray for me.' But when he did pray, I should have doubted whether she heard his words, except that she once murmured, 'Amen.' He was very much distressed. I never, indeed, saw him so openly touched by anything. He kept on saying to me, 'Don't you think anything can be done? Would it not be better to see a doctor? Can't I go for one?' But I knew there was nothing for any of us but to wait patiently till God should heal the wound He had seen fit to inflict. It was not a case for mortal skill to deal with. Marietta would have desired above all things to go back to Dernham with me, but guests were expected at Chilhurst who could not be put off, and it was impossible. I do not know, indeed, that I wanted anyone. I had nothing to bear or do in which sympathy could help me—nothing but the heavy, heavy burden of memory and regret—the thought which I scarcely ventured to face, that undoubtedly, though involuntarily, I had intensified my child's suffering. And so we said good-b'ye to all at Arling, and drove out of the gates, and beneath the evergreen arch which had been erected in Ina's honour! But for Agnes I must have given way utterly.

We were at home by five o'clock. The change that had passed over everything was awful. The stillness of death was in the house. My darling was taken upstairs,

and there she has remained ever since. She is not positively ill, though her pulse is so faint that I can scarcely feel it; but she is like a stone. She eats little or nothing, and says only a few words; and still, from time to time, comes the low murmur—so low that she cannot know that it reaches my ear—‘ If I had only been his wife, I might have been with him.’ What those words are to me in bitterness, God only knows!

September 14.—A parcel from India—a letter from Mr. Digby, and John’s journal; all other things are to be sent by sea. I took them at once to Agnes, and left them with her. An hour afterwards she sent for me. Her first words were, ‘ Mamma, darling, please come near and sit by me; ’ and I sat down close to her by the fire—for she has been chilly as in winter ever since she came back from Arling. She raised herself up from her chair, her hands clasped together, and with her large dreamy eyes fixed on me intently, said, ‘ Mamma, I am his wife, in God’s sight. He tells me so. I have murmured—oh, so wickedly! but I am his wife! Look!’—and she pointed to the inscription in the journal: ‘ To my own and only love—my wife in the sight of God!’ And then came the relief for which I had so earnestly longed, and the poor little broken heart gave vent to its agony in a burst of hysterical weeping.

She grew calm at last. We read Mr. Digby’s letter together, and she kept up wonderfully, gathering up the whole account, as it were, in one breath, and then going through each detail again, searching and commenting, and exhausting every shade of meaning, and still thirsting for more. It was a dry letter of facts; but there was sympathy underneath, and the few things which were told were all that we could have wished.

Poor fellow! he had improved greatly on the voyage—so his own journal shows; but when he landed, he thought

himself too well, and, with the recklessness of a young Englishman, would not take advice as to the climate. He went out for a walk in the heat, lost his way, and went on farther than he intended; then met an invalid soldier at the side of the road, and assisted him back to the town, which increased his fatigue by taking him a long way round. So he returned to Mr. Digby's bungalow utterly exhausted, and the next day was attacked with a kind of gastric fever. The doctors thought the case hopeless from the beginning, and he never rallied. At first he was delirious, but for the last eight hours he was conscious, and his chief suffering was from excessive weakness. Mr. Digby gives a minute account of everything that was done for him, showing that nothing had been neglected. The doctor said that his constitution must have been weakened by his illness in England. About two hours before he died, Mr. Grey, one of the Government chaplains, came, at his own request, and administered the Holy Communion to him; but he could bear nothing beyond the service. Up to that time Mr. Digby said he had scarcely spoken, even when conscious, but once he asked Mrs. Digby, who was with him night and day, to read a Psalm to him. When the chaplain was gone he sent for Mrs. Digby, and gave his last message for Agnes, spoken at intervals. 'Tell her that I only think of her. This is God's will, and I am content. I give myself to my Saviour. We shall be together there;' and he just raised his finger and pointed upwards. After this, when Mrs. Digby was waiting upon him, he looked at her and smiled, and said, 'too kind;' and again he mentioned my name, and Mrs. Digby caught the word 'love.' His last audible utterance was, 'Saviour, have mercy.' These final details were given in Mrs. Digby's handwriting. She had made a memorandum of them, intending to send them in a note to Agnes; but the fatigue of

nursing John had made her ill, and her husband would not delay writing, and therefore sent the paper as it was. I do not think we could wish for anything more. Life, not death, is the test of faith, and of a man's real earnestness; and no one who lived with John Penrhyn could doubt the reality of his religion. Agnes keeps his journal by her, and reads it slowly, pondering every word: now and then she points out a passage to me. It is very vivid and clever in its description of his fellow-passengers—their little peculiarities, their conversation, the small incidents of the voyage. As I read it, it seems impossible to believe that he is dead, and that all these earthly interests are over; and yet there is always an underlying tone of seriousness, which shows that the great realities of existence were never absent from his mind.

It would be an insoluble problem why such a career should have been cut short, if it were not for the belief, which is every day more and more impressed upon me, that earthly life is simply the dawning of existence,—that there is no gulf between this world and the next, but only a continuation in another sphere, and under different conditions of being, of that which has been before here. Thinking of this, I cannot grieve for him. If he had talent, and energy, and earnestness, and devotion on earth, he will not lose them in his new home, whatever may be the form in which they are to be exhibited.

But for Agnes?—Even for her I would not have it otherwise. ‘Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth;’ and she is surely one on whom His mark of approval has been set from infancy. She is comparatively peaceful now. ‘The bitterness of death is past.’ She says no more, ‘If I had been his wife, I might have been with him,’ but she looks up at me, and murmurs with quivering lips, ‘Mamma, I think I can say, “it is God’s will, and

I am content." He said it; and God will help me to be like him.'

And, for myself?—I thank God for the comfort and support He has granted me, and I do not for a moment doubt that all has been ordered for the best. Yet I can never forget how greatly my own hasty promise has influenced the course of events. That John Penrhyn's last illness was aggravated, and, humanly speaking, rendered fatal by his previous illness in England, is indisputable; and that the latter was brought on by anxiety and distress of mind is, I fear, equally certain. I could make myself very miserable about it; but again I try to feel that we are only responsible for our actions and their motives, and that we must leave the consequences to God. The promise was a grievous mistake, and it has had a grievous yet, doubtless, a merciful punishment.

CONCLUSION.

Seven years afterwards: July 5, 18 . . Yesterday my dear Essie and Frank Neville were married. They are entirely suited to each other, and the affection has been the growth of years. I do not doubt their happiness. They are to live in London. Frank is a rising barrister, and they will have all that is needed of this world's goods; so that I have no anxiety on that account. This great event in our quiet unchanging household is in one sense the end of my labours, and I find myself involuntarily reviewing them.

Yet, as I look around, and see the many influences which have united in forming the character of the children, whom I once fancied I was training according to my own theories, I almost begin to question whether, in fact, I have laboured at all. Certainly I have not done what I intended to do, and the result has not been what I expected. Not one of my children has realised my ideal—and yet I do not say that this ideal would have been better than the reality; for I never supposed they would be perfect; I never imagined them gifted with wonderful talents; but I fancied I understood the materials with which I had to deal, and that, by working upon them in certain ways, I should assuredly produce a foreseen and definite result.

Now, I am convinced that education is a negative, not a positive work—that it is God who trains and teaches, and that our chief business is to remove obstacles (if one may be permitted so to speak) out of His way. When Ina married I was disappointed and self-reproachful. She

was not in any degree what I had hoped. The faults with which I had been so long battling were still prominent. I could not firmly rely on her religious principles. She had feeling, but failed in action; and she had voluntarily married a man who was her inferior in intellect, and who would therefore, in all probability, foster her natural love of power, her self-will, and vanity. And a good deal of all this might, no doubt, have been different if I had acted more wisely. I could not but think so, though I scarcely knew to what precise mistakes to attribute the failure;—so many things had occurred to interfere with the warning which I had desired to give;—there had been such interruptions in Ina's education, such counteracting influences; and I had never sufficiently calculated upon her position of independence. It seemed as if my object had constantly been thwarted, partly by my own faults, partly by those of others. It was not at all a satisfactory review of the past which I made then, and it is not so now. But I am learning to look upon it more patiently. If God had intended our work to be perfect, He would have made us—His instruments—perfect; and if He had intended that it should be our work rather than His, He would have left it in our hands, and never have interfered with it. Ina's training has been given, and is still being given, by the circumstances of her life—those circumstances in which she, of her own accord, placed herself.

She is tried, disappointed, yet infinitely improved. That is the one thing which comforts me. I hope and believe that, through God's mercy, I was enabled to make her in her early youth so far real in her religion that she has learnt to turn trial to its true account. She is not irritated by it, but chastened and humbled. The unkind feeling of her husband's family towards her has been softened, but there has never been any cordiality, and I do not believe there will be as long as Mrs. Harcourt lives.

She governs Lady Anson's weak mind, and keeps up her distrust of Ina. The consequence is, what I feared;—Henry Anson, always unable to stand alone, has been led to think that his wife is too fond of power, and that it is his duty to resist her; and so he does resist—resting, not upon reason, but upon his authority as a husband; thwarting her for the mere purpose of thwarting,—and this, not so much because he wishes to tease her,—for he is really very fond of her,—but simply because it has been instilled into him that he ought to have his own way. Ina has done all she can to retain her influence; and when they were first married, she carried out successfully the plans she had formed for regularity and work in which her husband was to share. But, after a time, Lady Anson appeared again at the Manor, and then the home atmosphere altered, and by degrees there was a kind of cabal formed between Mrs. Harcourt and Lady Anson against poor Ina, which, unhappily, still continues;—a quiet, insinuating, unobtrusive conspiracy it is, but one which works very decided results. Ina has her own ideas for the children (she has four—Harry, Marian, George, and Frances—all Anson names); and Lady Anson, when staying at the Manor, goes into the nursery, when Ina is not there, and questions and criticises, and then suggests changes to her son, which he brings forward in the most provoking way, as if they were his own wishes. And if Ina stops him by some of her practical experience, he falls back upon his mother, and pits her opinion against that of his wife; and so there come domestic contests of a very unsatisfactory kind. So there did come, I should rather say; for Ina has learnt, in these and in other ways, to be wonderfully self-controlled, and to manage her husband cleverly. She gives into him in the small matters which are of no consequence, and this satisfies him that he is really—as Mrs. Harcourt says—master in his own house, and then quietly takes her own

way in those which are of importance. But when I say this, I really feel ashamed of it; it is so unlike the mode in which a wife ought to deal with her husband. But if a sensible woman marries a foolish man, and the foolish man will interfere with nursery and domestic arrangements about which he knows nothing, what can she do? The really painful result of this state of things is, that natural and inevitable one on Ina's side—a diminution of affection. Whilst her husband worshipped her, she shut her eyes to his inferiority; now that he opposes her, she sees his weakness, and is, I fear, at times tempted to exaggerate it. Her happiness is found, not in him, but in her children; and these she idolises. All her powers of affection are brought out by them. She was always inclined to pet those who were dependent on her, and naturally she lavishes this tenderness upon her little ones. They are only little as yet; Harry is not six, and the baby, Frances, is scarcely a year old. One cannot prophesy anything of them, but I am afraid they will be a cause of contention as they grow older. Ina, with all her fondness, is a disciplinarian. She tells me that she learnt to be so from me. Henry Anson is weakly indulgent. Ina says to me sometimes, with tears in her eyes, that she is sure Harry will be ruined by his father, and that Lady Anson and Mrs. Harcourt are already planning for the boy's education without consulting her. And I am obliged to recommend patience and tact, and beg her to put her anxieties into her prayers, and to trust that God will work good out of what seems to be evil. But the anxiety and fretting wear her, poor child! very greatly. She has quite lost her fresh beauty; though she is still, and always will be, singularly graceful. I am afraid there are times when it crosses her mind, as it did nine years ago, that her marriage has been a mistake. And yet it will not be so, in one sense, if it should lead her, as

I hope and believe it is leading her, nearer to God. She turns to me in all her troubles, and opens her heart to me as she never used to do; and I can see how much deeper her religion is becoming—how it supports and strengthens her, and hallows her daily life; and how especially it enables her to struggle against any deadness of feeling towards her husband—to make allowance for him, and to put any points of difference between them in the best light. At first after her marriage we saw comparatively little of each other. Knowing Henry Anson as I did, and being quite aware that there are very few men who have not some jealousy of a wife's family, I was quite resolved to keep in the background. I was sure that it was better for Henry and Ina to go wrong by their own light than to go right by mine. So, though we lived within a mile of each other, and Ina was always anxious for my opinion about her little arrangements, I took care to give it very seldom, and then always, if possible, to Henry himself. And I cautioned Ina especially against ever saying, 'Mamma thinks so and so, therefore it must be right.' At length, in one or two cases of illness, my help was absolutely needed, and Henry himself came to ask for it; and then I gave it, just so far as was required, and no farther. Now he has entirely recognised that I have not the slightest wish to interfere in his household, and that if I ever do give Ina advice, it is in order that she may more fully carry out his wishes; and so we have become excellent friends, and at times are quite confidential; and, not being his wife, I can be really fond of him. One difficulty has been removed from Ina's path by the fact that Mrs. Penrhyn is becoming very infirm, and cannot therefore interfere in her affairs. Almost immediately after the wedding she had a serious illness, consequent, I really think, upon the excitement and the shock which came so near together. She recovered in a degree,

but she has never been what she was before. Ina goes to Arling occasionally, but only for a few days, and it is quite a visit to an invalid. Bessie is an indefatigable nurse, and really wears herself out in waiting upon her mother. I have asked her often to spend a week or two with me, to give her rest and change, and at one time she did occasionally allow Mrs. Huddersfield to take her place at Arling; but, latterly, she has refused; and she writes me word that her mother is so weak, and so dependent upon her, that it is impossible to leave her. So the end of that tale is drawing near. Mrs. Penrhyn is one of those persons whom one can but leave to God's judgment, feeling totally unable to form any true opinion of her oneself. My last recollections are of her extreme kindness and sympathy on that terrible morning after the wedding.

Mr. Neville and Marietta we see tolerably frequently. They have three children now—two little boys, Edward and Charles, besides Cissy. Mr. Neville has bought Woodleigh, and they come here whenever they want sea air. They are just what one would have prophesied they would be. When I think of them I always feel as if they were travelling along a road without any windings, which led straight to Heaven; though they are the last persons to say so themselves, and I daresay see as many windings and twistings in their path as I do in mine—which is saying a good deal.

The last time they were here it was on a sad occasion—the funeral of dear old Captain Shaw. He had a lingering illness, retaining his faculties to the last. And he was so happy! It was better than any sermon to go and sit with and talk to him. He was so quaint and vivid in his expectations of the world to which he was hastening! Sometimes when he talked of it, I could scarcely believe that he realised the awful step to be taken before he could enter it. But it was, in one sense, not awful to him. Agnes

went to see him every day latterly, for he looked upon her quite as his child. She was indeed the very last visitor whom he saw, for she was with him at five o'clock in the afternoon, and that same night he died in his sleep. I think all Dernham and half Westford attended his funeral; and Mr. Neville and Marietta happening to be in London, came down on purpose for it. The Rector felt his loss very much—the good old man had always been his right hand in parish matters, and there is no one to take his place. He quite broke down when reading the service; and even now he never mentions Captain Shaw's name without a change in his tone, as if he was speaking of some one not quite earthly in his goodness. Yet they had their little differences when they were working together; and I don't think either of them understood the love and respect which was mutually felt. For so we live side by side with the saints of God, never thoroughly recognising the 'divinity that stirs within them,' till death has set the seal of corruption upon the body, and they come before us,—as we say, in memory, but more truly in spiritual reality—purified and refined as they are in the presence of their Saviour. The Rector keeps more and more to himself, or rather to his parish. I regret often that he has so little social influence. The poor people, however, worship him. I now and then wonder that, good as he is, he has never been able more entirely to overcome his great disappointment; but there are some hearts which can only expand in one direction, and when that is closed to them, are shut up within themselves, and can never open again. I really believe he has but one great earthly interest beyond his parish, and that is little Cissy. He makes her call him uncle; and she spends half her time with him when the Nevilles are at Woodleigh; but the blank when she is gone is grievous. The question crosses my mind occasionally—what will be the position of such a man, as

regards his human affections, when he enters upon another world? But it is a vain thought. God can take care of His own.

As for my nearer home interests, I have cause for great thankfulness, though of course I have some anxieties. Charlie is in India; and everyone tells me, and he says himself, that he is doing well. I hear of nothing but steadiness and right conduct; and if this world were all, I should be perfectly content. But, looking beyond it, there are things which I should certainly desire to see altered.

A young man's position in a country station in India is very deadening, as regards religion; and though Charlie would never be irreligious, yet he is likely to become indifferent. I feel now, as I have felt all my life, what a terrible loss my boys had in their father—far greater than the girls; and especially in the matter of religion. A man's religious earnestness tells upon a man as a woman's never can. It is taken for granted that women are to be religious, or, at least, open to excitement and feeling upon the subject. And though it is perfectly true that the memory and words of a mother may touch a man's heart when he has entered on the wrong path, yet it is also true that the warnings, and the example of a father would, in all probability, have prevented him from straying into it.

I am sometimes induced to blame myself for having been willing that Charlie should go to India; a definite career was such a great temptation, and I did not dread the climate at first, as I have learnt to dread it since John Penrhyn's death. I fear that I did not consider enough what his position would be, away from a church, in the midst of heathenism. But then, on the other hand, he would have had temptations in England. With his inclination to extravagance, and love of society, he might have been led into worse evils than he is ever likely to fall into in India. And there he has the support of position

and responsibility. He is kept up by the fact that others look up to him. I suppose in all these cases one is only safe in taking the outward circumstances—the Providential sign-posts, if one may so call them—as one's guide; and I think in this case they were clear. It was Charlie's own wish, and I believe it would have been his father's for him. He had no inclination for any other profession; and I should have found it extremely difficult to put him into one, unless he had taken orders, which he was not fitted for. And he was just one of those boys who would have been ruined by poverty. He never could have drudged as a clerk in a Government office; it would have made him discontented and reckless. No; I believe I was right: and so I will try not to question the matter, but only to commend him to God.

Hugh is much more satisfactory. He has a braver spirit than Charlie. He does not fear the world in the same way, and so he can stand apart, and resist it. And he has resisted it boldly from the beginning. During his college career (he gained a scholarship first, and he hopes to obtain a fellowship) he has never given me a moment's uneasiness. Money is a great test of character with young men; it exercises their self-denial. Hugh has never exceeded his allowance, and the desire to save me expense has been a ruling principle. Then, too, he has been kept up by his wonderful affection for Essie; and she has imbibed religion, as it were, from Agnes; and so they tell upon each other. Hugh's great ambition is to follow Frank Neville's career. I think there has been a little feeling of jealousy since Essie's engagement: he does not quite understand having his pet sister taken from him. But he has striven against the feeling manfully, and in the highest and best way. And Agnes, with her gentle sympathy, has helped him; so that, as he said to me only this morning when he bade me good-bye, as he went off

to join a reading party at the sea-side, 'Dearest mother, I never knew how good goodness could be till I talked to Agnes.'

'A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump;' and surely this is the case with my darling's heavenly-mindedness. She is what she was. It has been said to me again and again, that, as time went on, she would recover (so people talk); and in one sense she has recovered; for she is more than resigned—she is bright, and hopeful, and interested, and absolutely contented. But she lives simply and literally as on a journey, enjoying and labouring in the present, but ever looking forward to the end.

I have almost ceased to reproach myself for any share which I have had in her sorrow. Both my husband and I made a great mistake with a good intention. Such things are always severely punished; but God, in His mercy, brings good out of them; and it is vain now to think of what might have been if no obstacle to the marriage had been raised. Things would have been different, but they might not have been happier. And if my child had never known John Penrhyn, or, having known him, if she had been kept from an intimate acquaintance with him, would she have married anyone else? I doubt it. With his exception, I have never seen the man I felt would be in the least likely to win her heart; and now—it may seem at her age a strong assertion, but I feel it is true—she has no heart to give. Yet she is better, infinitely better, for having loved; better with a hallowed sorrow than she would have been with a peaceful indifference. It has enlarged her sympathies, opened her mind, given her a truer view of life and its claims. Without earthly love she might have been the nun in her cell, preparing for Heaven herself; with it she is the Sister of Charity in the world, carrying others there with her.

Mrs. Bradshaw sometimes says to me, 'My dear, if earth

were peopled with Agnes Anstruthers, there would be no companionship for such a sinner as myself; and so I am thankful occasionally to meet with people who walk on a lower level; but, next to reading the Bible, I know nothing so helpful as Agnes' face. The only thing I ever regret is that she can't enjoy her own goodness. She would so love herself if she could but know what she is like. And, poor darling! she has not the least idea of it, and never will have; which is hard, but I suppose can't be helped.'

Mrs. Bradshaw places herself on the lower level, and perhaps the world would do the same, but I am not sure that I should. No doubt there will be phases of goodness in Heaven, as there are here; and the society of even saints and angels might be dull if they were all alike. I don't think anyone who knew what her life is—her constant self-sacrifice, untiring usefulness, quick sympathy, and her courageous avowal of religious principles under all circumstances—could possibly estimate her actions less highly than those of Agnes. What they would miss is, the reverential, the refined, spiritual tone, which is to the character what scent is to the flower. But this is a gift. We may admire and cherish it where it has been bestowed, but we must not judge and look down upon those in whom it is wanting. What Mrs. Bradshaw has been, and is still to me, I really cannot attempt to say. It was her affection which kept me from being utterly broken down by the shock of John Penrhyn's death, accompanied as it was by such great anxiety for Agnes, and such continual, though perhaps exaggerated, regret and self-reproach. And since then I have never had a joy or sorrow in which she has not shared. My dear Essie's marriage has been as great a delight to her, as if it had been the marriage of one of her own grandchildren. She has always retained her predilection for Essie, and she prophesied the marriage long before Frank Neville ventured to propose. But she

has, as usual, peculiar ideas about it. 'Essie likes to have her own way,' she said to me yesterday; 'and that is just what I understand. I am only afraid that you have so lectured her upon obedience that, when she has made her vow to obey, she will never venture to lift up her finger against her husband, which would be a pity. I have the greatest respect for men in general, and Frank Neville in particular, but you know they are spoilable; and a wife who can't look her husband in the face, and say, "You are wrong," is a temptation to the wisest and best of men. I once knew a man who had two perfectly obedient wives (of course in succession), and he was ruined by them—absolutely ruined. He went through the world like a roaring lion, and died of a fit of apoplexy, brought on by passion.'

'All because of his wives' obedience?' I inquired.

'To be sure. What he wanted was self-discipline, which was just what they prevented him from exercising. They removed all the obstacles out of his path, till he quite forgot there were any to avoid; and so at length, when he did meet with one, it excited him to such a degree that he died of it.'

'Possibly,' was my meditation when left to myself. But I am not afraid for Essie. She has always been accustomed to speak her mind, and form her independent opinion, however she may have yielded in action. She will make a very good little wife; a help-meet, not a slave; and Frank Neville will love her all the more, because she can venture sometimes to differ from him. They are beginning life with mutual respect, and full consciousness that God has the first place in each heart; and the foundation of their happiness being secure, I have no fears as to the superstructure.

But Essie is a great loss. My dear Agnes does her very utmost to make up for it; but we both feel that there is a terrible blank in the house. If it were not for

Ina's children, who are every day becoming a greater interest to us, I do not know how we should bear it. In fact it never will be filled up. It is in this respect with marriage as with death. We become accustomed to the changes which it brings, but when we look back we never cease to feel that something has been taken from the treasure of our lives. Only with marriage there spring up new interests, which, in time, cover, in a certain degree, the void that has been made. With death it is far otherwise. Long ago as it is since I laid my sweet Cecil to rest in her foreign grave, I never can so reconcile myself to her loss as to think of her without a pang.

In the midst of my busiest occupations, I glance at her likeness, and the rush of the undying love is felt at my heart, and tears, unbidden, rise to my eyes. And when I stand still, sometimes, and compel myself to think whither I am travelling and what the life will be which is drawing nearer and nearer with every sunrise and sunset, I have a vision of her—etherealised, purified, yet scarcely more lovely than she was when I last looked upon her—waiting on the shores of the 'Silent Land' to welcome me with the story of the happiness which has been hers in Paradise whilst we have been mourning for her here. She must be mine again, for I love her now as I loved her when she died, and the love upon which death has set its seal can never change.

Yet I never wish for her back again—never, for a moment. I recognise with the fullest consent of my reason and of my heart that her Saviour took her to Himself in love, because 'Some good thing toward Him' was found in her, but I long for her intensely in the future. And God will not be angry with me for it. If I could think of her now with indifference, where would be the joy in the prospect of reunion?

It is to that my thoughts turn continually. As, one by one, my children remove from me to form new homes,

new resting-places for their human affections, I turn to the world where we shall again all be one, in the capacity of an unbounded and immortal love, and in that hope can bear, not without a pang, but with an entire and cheerful submission, the partial severance of the tie which has bound them to me here.

‘It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him;’—and if like Him, then able to love as He loves. There is the comfort when the heart is oppressed and the mind bewildered by the intricacies and shortcomings of those human feelings which we believe that we shall carry with us to our eternal rest.

Beyond and above this earthly love—God knows better than I can say what it is I seek.

I have lived in the life of others till I have scarcely put before myself, in words, Where is the ultimate home of my heart? I have but felt that, all-precious to me as human affection has been, it is not, and cannot be, my All. Perhaps I am sensible of this the more because the dream of love which is the enchantment of youth was, in my case, but imperfectly realised. I lost the temptation to earthly idolatry, but with it also I lost the delight. And so I have learnt to live with another joy, another hope—a hidden love; and year by year it has become more real, more true.

There is a Presence which stands by me when I wake, and lives with me through the day, and watches close beside me when I lie down at night, and is safety and brightness when I open my eyes in the midnight darkness, and I know that none can separate me from It.

In the realisation of that Presence, my longing, eager heart, has found its home for Time, and—God grant it—for Eternity.





